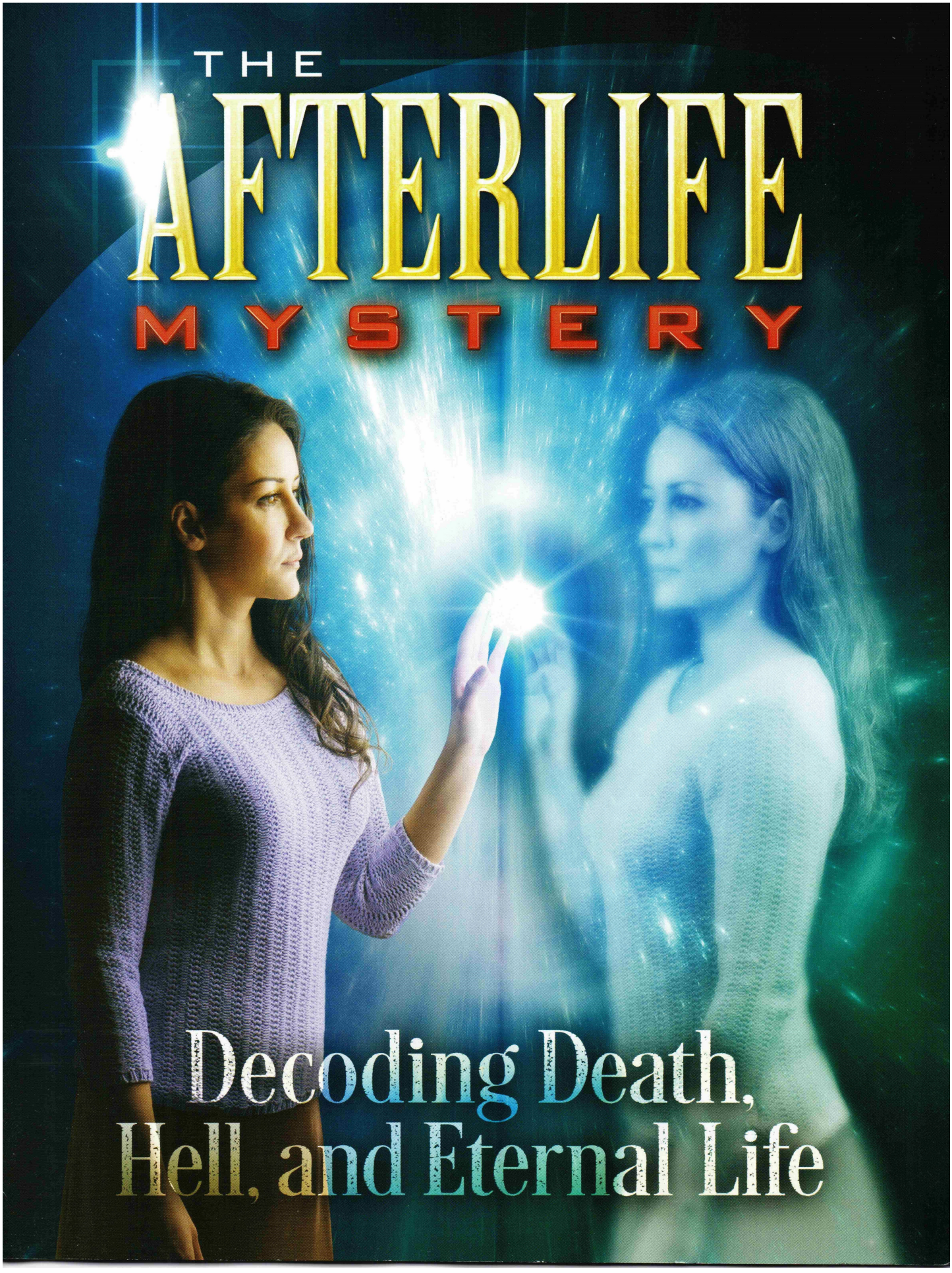

THE
AFTERLIFE
MYSTERY
Decoding Death,
Hell, and Eternal Life

AMAZING FACTS

The Afterlife Mystery

PRESIDENT
DOUG BATCHELOR

MANAGING EDITOR
ANTHONY LESTER
editor@amazingfacts.org

WRITERS
CURTIS RITTENOUR
COSMIN RITIVOIU
LAURIE LYON

ART DESIGN/LAYOUT
HALEY TRIMMER

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Amazing Facts, a nonprofit ministry, shares the saving truths of Jesus Christ around the world through literature, radio, television, the Internet, public evangelism, outreach training, and more.

**Amazing Facts, Inc.**
P.O. Box 1058
Roseville, CA 95678-8058
Phone: 916-434-3880
Fax: 916-434-3889

**Visit our website at www.amazingfacts.org**

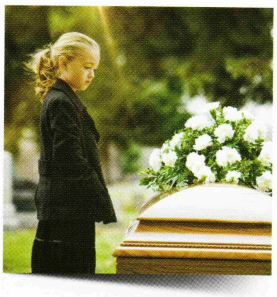
## FREE BIBLE STUDIES

To enroll in our free 27-lesson Bible study, visit our homepage at amazingfacts.org and click on "Free Online Bible School." Or to take the free course by mail, send us your name, address, and phone number and specify that you would like to begin the course. (Printed lessons are in English and are available only in Canada, the United States, and their territories.)

## ONLINE BOOKSTORE

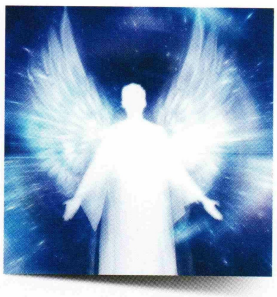
Visit **afbookstore.com** to discover all the great Christian resources available through Amazing Facts, including books, DVDs, and other products to help you better understand the Bible.

# Contents



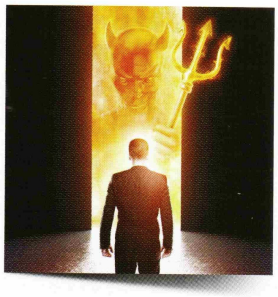
PART 1

**What Happens When You Die?** . . . . . 6
What Is Life? . . . . . 7
Living Souls . . . . . 8
What Is Death? . . . . . 8
Are We Immortal? . . . . . 9
The Wages of Sin . . . . . 10
The Sleep of Death . . . . . 11
Places of Death . . . . . 11
Absent from the Body . . . . . 12
What About Reincarnation? . . . . . 13
The Rich Man and Lazarus . . . . . 14



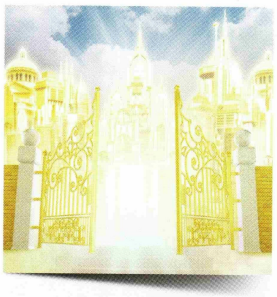
PART 2

**What Is Spiritualism?** . . . . . 16
The Roots of Spiritualism . . . . . 17
Séances and Popular Mediums . . . . . 18
A False Identity . . . . . 18
What About Ghosts? . . . . . 19
What About Saul and the Witch of Endor? . . 19



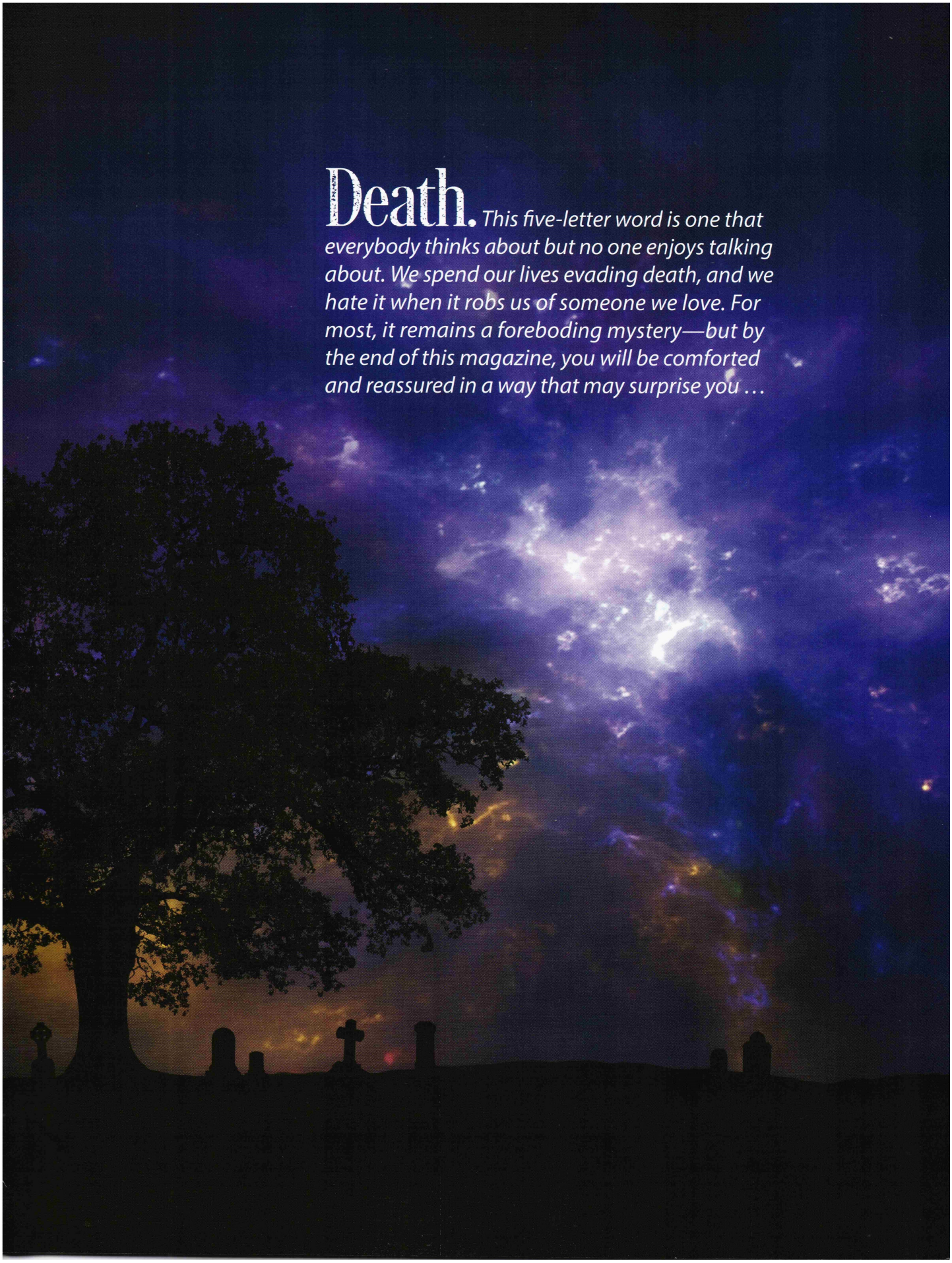
PART 3

**Is the Devil in Charge of Hell?** . . . . . 20
Is There Really a Hell? . . . . . 21
Hellish Words . . . . . 21
"End of the Line" for the Wicked . . . . . 21
Hell: When and Where . . . . . 22
What Is the Purpose of Hell? . . . . . 23
What About "Forever and Ever"? . . . . . 24
Cleansing the Earth . . . . . 24
What About the Worm that Doesn't Die? . . 25



PART 4

**What About Heaven?** . . . . . 26
Heaven—A Real Forever Home . . . . . 27
The New Jerusalem . . . . . 27
New Bodies . . . . . 28
Eternal Joys . . . . . 28
What About NDEs? . . . . . 29
Is the Holy City Really Big Enough? . . . . . 29
How Can I Get to Heaven? . . . . . 30



# Death.

*This five-letter word is one that everybody thinks about but no one enjoys talking about. We spend our lives evading death, and we hate it when it robs us of someone we love. For most, it remains a foreboding mystery—but by the end of this magazine, you will be comforted and reassured in a way that may surprise you …*

# Questions that Never Go Away

What happens when we die?

This short, simple question has generated countless books, inspired lively debates, helped turn movies into blockbusters, and even prompted extensive investigation by the scientific community.

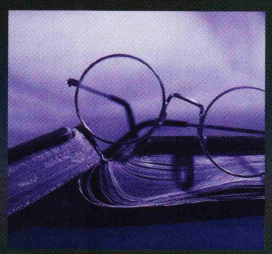
But can we *know* where people go after their bodies completely shut down, after their hearts stop beating—after they flatline? What lies beyond the grave? Is it heaven, hell, purgatory, reincarnation, some undefinable plane of existence, or perhaps nothing at all?

Do we possess an immortal soul that lives on in some ghost-like form? Or do real, physical bodies await us where wicked people are punished eternally and righteous people are awarded eternal bliss? Or do we simply cease to exist, turning back into dust?

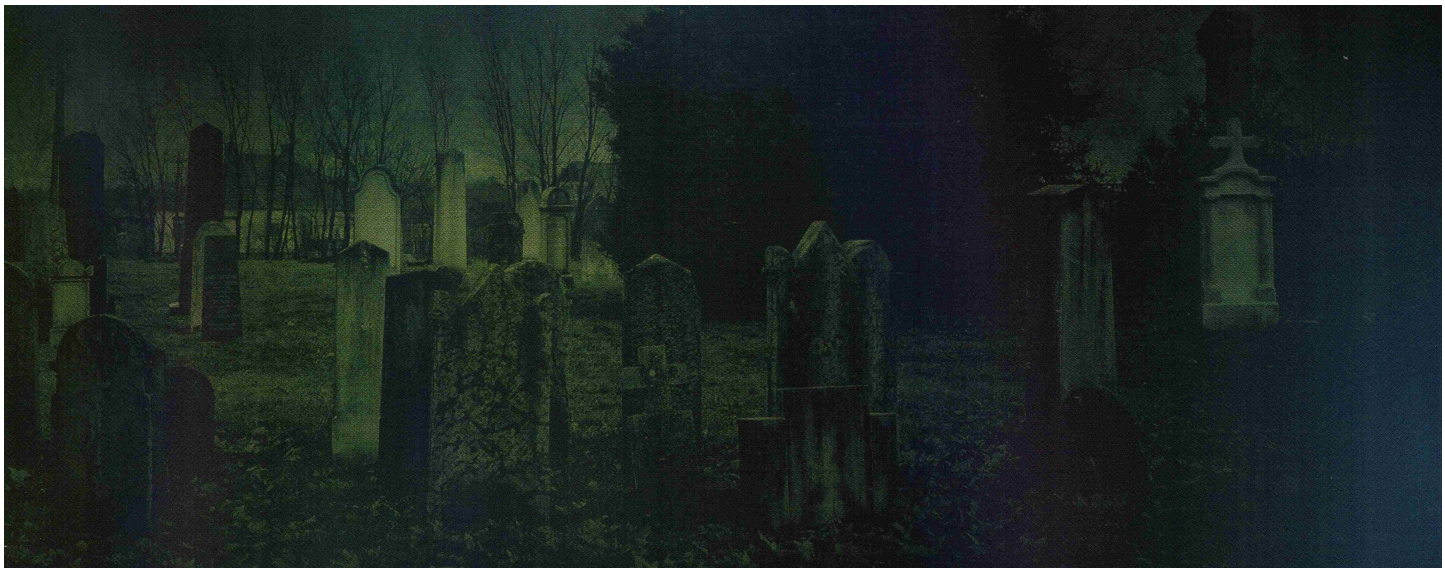
## A Taste of the Hereafter

We all know the certainty of death. Benjamin Franklin said, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." But who speaks the truth about what happens *after* death?

It seems everyone, from celebrities to world leaders, has an opinion about dying. The famous Hollywood director Woody Allen quipped, "I don't want to achieve immortality through my work; I want to achieve immortality through not dying." The Communist dictator



Steve Jobs, former Apple CEO, died in 2011 at age 56. Before his passing, he said, "No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new." *Yet if death is such a great idea, why do so many people fight against it?*



and atheist Joseph Stalin bluntly stated, "Death is the solution to all problems. No man, no problem."

Political activist Huey Newton admitted, "My fear was not of death itself, but a death without meaning." And Billy Graham, the famous televangelist, shared, "No matter how prepared you think you are for the death of a loved one, it still comes as a shock, and it still hurts very deeply."

Most viewpoints, however, leave us hanging regarding the facts. Scientist and artist Leonardo da Vinci said, "As a well-spent day brings happy sleep, so a life well spent brings happy death." (Most of us would never think to say "happy death.") Sigmund Freud believed, "The goal of all life is death." And musical genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart shared, "I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness."

Indeed, there is no shortage of philosophical views on the afterlife. But all we really want are solid, dependable, straightforward answers. Right?

## Religion and the Afterlife

In their search for truth about death and the afterlife, billions have turned to faith—yet the most popular religions in the world teach a contradictory mix of ideas about it. Some believe that death is the end of all existence. Others favor reincarnation. Many believe their dead ancestors interact with the world of the living.

The ancient Egyptians developed an extensive system of beliefs and detailed rituals about the afterlife to help people make a smooth transition to another world. Incantations were memorized from the Book of the Dead in preparation for death, and corpses were embalmed so that the dead could live again.



In Greek mythology, Hades was said to be the king of the underworld, a place where souls lived on after death. The Greek god Hermes supposedly took dead souls to the underworld and sometimes left them on the banks of the River Styx, between life and death, until Charon would take them across—but only if the family of the deceased had left gold as a bribe.

Buddhists believe in a cycle of birth, life, and death and that deeds determine whether a soul moves upward toward nirvana or downward into misery. Hindus believe in another type of reincarnation, a works-based journey called *karma,* which supposedly will lead them toward a spiritual state of perfection.

The Quran describes an afterlife of either paradise, *Jannah,* or hell, *Jahannam*. The type of deeds committed in this life determines which of seven levels a soul enters while waiting in the grave for the resurrection. Even before the Day of Judgment, deceased souls already begin to get a taste of their future destiny.

Within Judaism and Christianity, there are differing ideas about what happens at death. Judaism traditionally sees Sheol as a term for the grave and that, until the resurrection, "the dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). This view is also held by some Christians, yet many others interpret some Bible passages about the "spirit" and "soul" to indicate that a separate, conscious entity leaves the body at death and exists beyond the grave.

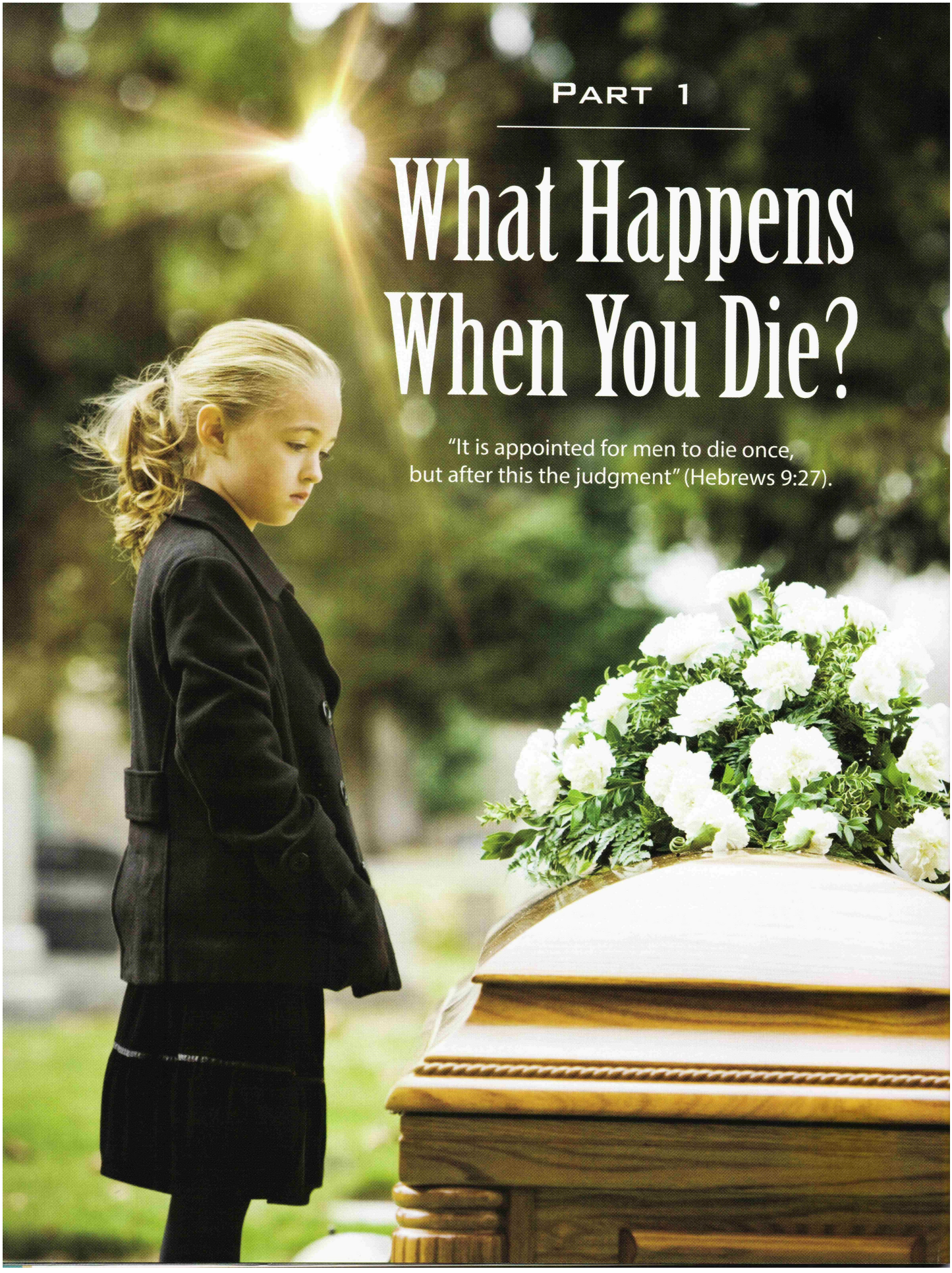


## The Basis for Truth

With so many conflicting views regarding the afterlife, is it even possible to know for certain what happens when we die? The simple answer for those still living is No. Science has been unable to give us an objective answer so far.

That's why this magazine offers the Bible perspective about death and the afterlife—and you'll be amazed at what you *think* the Bible says about these subjects versus what it *actually* says. And this is a cause for rejoicing; knowing the truth about death can take away the anxiety and provide you with a picture of hope and assurance like nothing else can. It can also help you better deal with the grief of losing a family member or friend.

It's worth the discovery, and we're happy you're making the journey with us …



PART 1

# What Happens When You Die?

"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

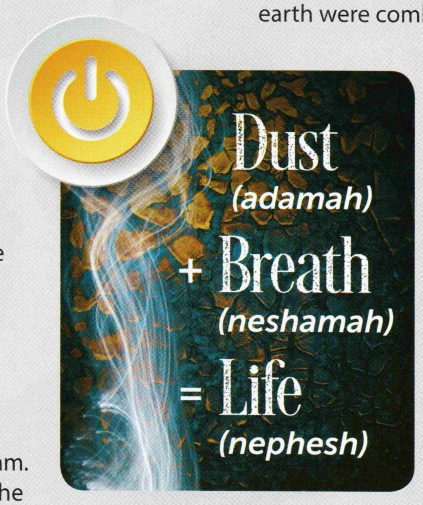
# What Is Life?

Death has most often been defined as the end of life. But what is life? And how did it begin on Planet Earth? If we want to understand the secret of what happens when we die, it's important to know the nature of life.

In the book of Genesis, which means "beginnings," we find the story of the Creator making Adam, the first human being. According to the Bible, on the sixth day of creation,

> God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:27).

A more complete picture of the creation of Adam is found in the next chapter. Notice the details: "The LORD God formed man of the *dust of the ground*, and breathed into his nostrils *the breath of life*; and man *became a living being*" (Genesis 2:7, emphasis added).




Did you notice them? God combined two elements to create Adam.

The **first** element is the "dust of the ground" (Hebrew *'adamah*, which simply means the soil, dust, or earth). We see the truth of this when a body decomposes at death, when "the dust will return to the earth as it was" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Further, after Adam sinned, God told him, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

The **second** element in the creation of Adam came directly from God. The Lord "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." God used divine breath, joined with dust, to create a "living being" (Hebrew *nephesh*). Adam did not exist before breath and earth were combined; he came into existence only when God formed him and breathed into him the breath of life.

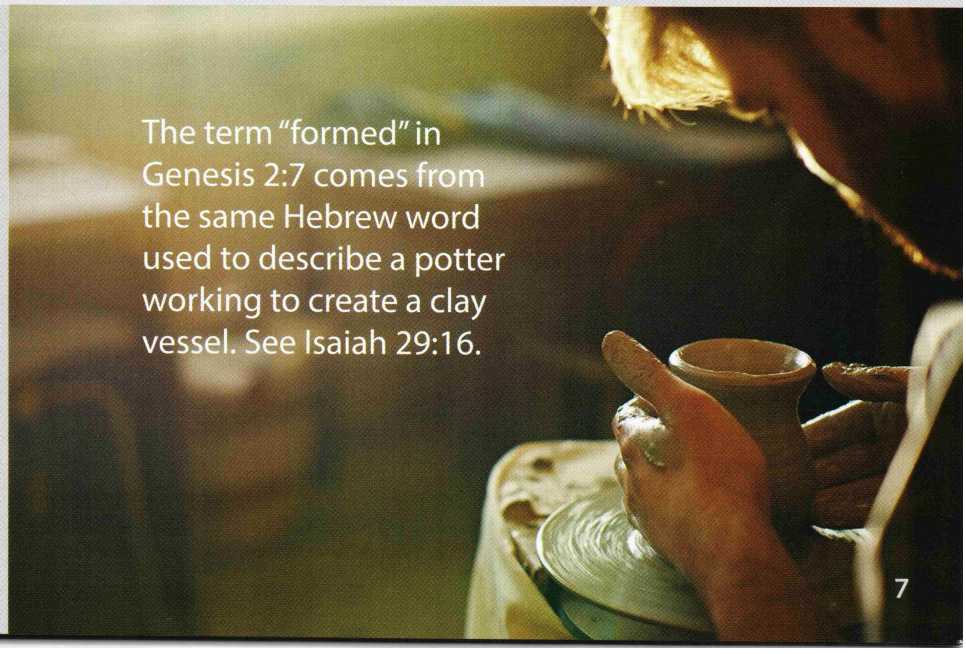
What, exactly, is the breath of life (Hebrew *neshamah*)?

The "breath of life" God gave Adam was the divine spark of life, a life-giving energy that came into the lifeless body of the first man. This vital life force did not belong to Adam but was given to him at his creation.

We see the nature of life elsewhere in Scripture. For instance, Job explained, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4).

It's crucial to know that the same term ("breath of life") is also used for animals. Speaking of the worldwide flood in Noah's day, the Bible says, "All flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. *All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life*, all that was on the dry land, died" (Genesis 7:21, 22, emphasis added).

Non-biblical accounts of the Creation written at the same time as Genesis describe people being made of divine matter, but the Bible says that mankind's physical framework came from the elements of the earth.



## Living Souls

The King James Bible translates the Hebrew word *nephesh* as "soul." Thus, it renders Genesis 2:7 in this way: "Man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). Most modern translations render *nephesh* as "living being" or "living person."

The word "soul" in this passage might be confusing because this term is often connected with the idea of the "immortal soul," but this is a concept this passage in Genesis doesn't address. Genesis does not describe Adam as *having* a soul—some type of ethereal entity that is distinct from his physical body. Instead, the Bible says that Adam *became* a soul—a living person—when God combined the dust of the earth with the breath of life.

It's clear from the Bible that a "soul" is simply a living human being. When you walk down the street and see another person strolling by, you are seeing a soul. Nothing in the Creation account indicates that a soul exists apart from the body. There is no reason to assume, then, that a conscious, immortal entity exists separate from the physical form given to us by God. The Bible even says, "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20).

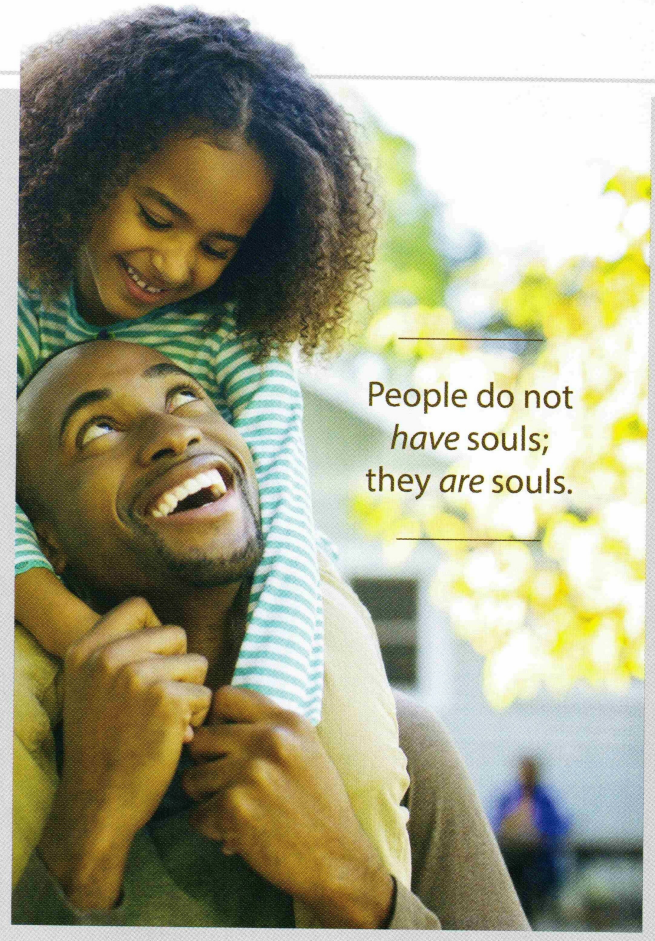
A "soul" is simply a living human being.

Often the Bible uses the word "soul" to refer to the whole person, and sometimes translators used it to refer to our emotions. But Scripture does not teach that humans are made of two distinct parts that exist apart from each other. Again, a living being exists only when the body and breath come together. This indivisible union makes a soul—a living person.

## What Is Death?

In the very simplest terms, death is the opposite of life. So, what happens at death should be the reverse of what happened when Adam was created. That is, the elements that make up the body return to the earth (Genesis 3:19) and the breath of life returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Again, we have no indication from Scripture that this "breath" that returns to God is some kind of conscious being floating up to heaven—instead, it is simply the divine, life-giving energy that God gives to all living things.



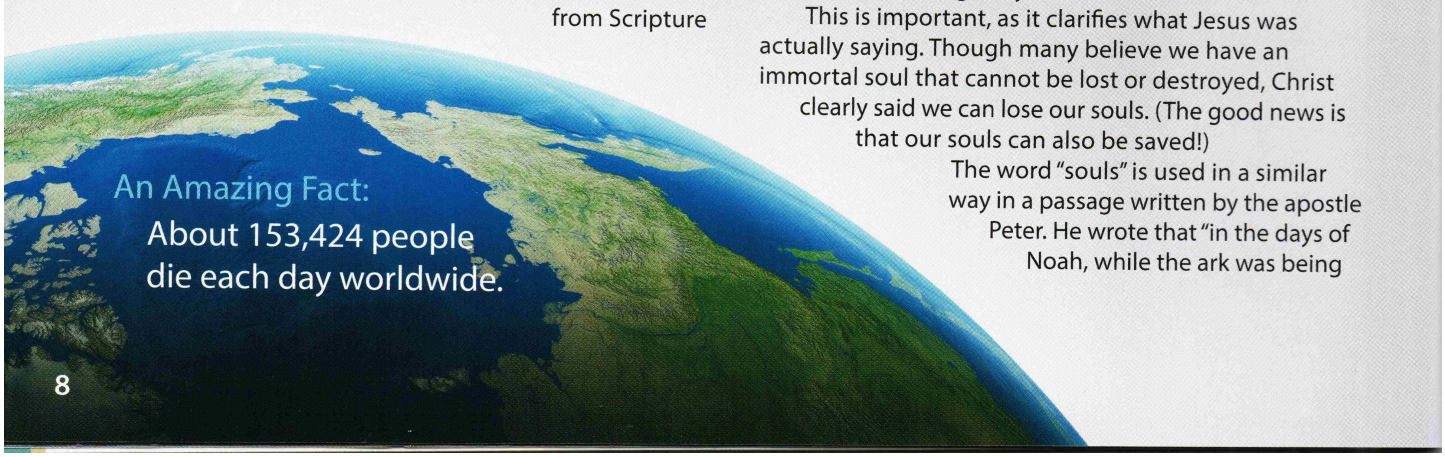
People do not *have* souls; they *are* souls.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *psuche* is sometimes translated as "soul." Notice how the following passage uses the words "life" and "soul." Jesus said, "Whoever desires to save his *life* will lose it, but whoever loses his *life* for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own *soul?* Or what will a man give in exchange for his *soul?*" (Matthew 16:25, 26, emphasis added).

Did you know that both uses of the word "life" and both uses of the word "soul" come from the same Greek word—*psuche?* Thus, in this one passage, "life" and "soul" are used interchangeably.

This is important, as it clarifies what Jesus was actually saying. Though many believe we have an immortal soul that cannot be lost or destroyed, Christ clearly said we can lose our souls. (The good news is that our souls can also be saved!)

The word "souls" is used in a similar way in a passage written by the apostle Peter. He wrote that "in the days of Noah, while the ark was being



An Amazing Fact:
About 153,424 people die each day worldwide.

prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20). He clearly meant eight living, breathing persons were saved from the flood, which is how many translations convey this passage.

## Are We Immortal?

The word "mortal" means "subject to death." A "mortal blow," for instance, describes an injury that leads to death. People instinctively know that everyone is mortal, because everyone eventually dies.

However, many today believe they have a soul that is *not* subject to death—that is, immortal—even though the Bible never indicates that we have an immortal part of us that is distinct from the body; rather, we *are* souls who can die, according to the words of Jesus.

Let's consider this carefully; you may be surprised to find out what the Bible really says about immortality!

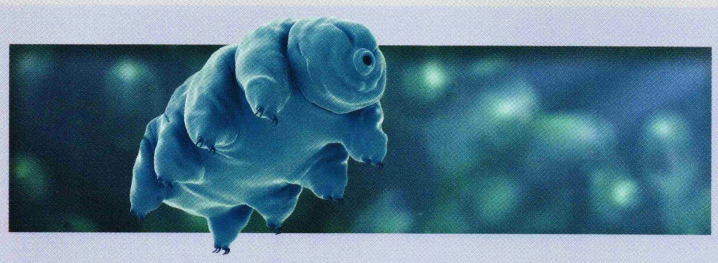
For instance, did you know that Scripture never once uses the term "immortal soul"? Indeed, the Bible rarely even uses the word "immortal." The apostle Paul wrote, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever" (1 Timothy 1:17). He further stated that God "alone has immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16). It's clear that God is the only immortal being.

If that is true, what does the Bible teach about the natural state of humans—are we mortal or immortal? Do the Scriptures *really* teach that a soul is immortal?

Let's look at the first statement in the Bible regarding death. God said it directly to Adam in the Garden of Eden:

> The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely *die*" (Genesis 2:16, 17, emphasis added).

Notice that God did not say, "If you sin, you will live forever in hell." Eve understood this reality. When tempted by the serpent, she said, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God



## The "Immortal" Water Bear

The tardigrades, also known as water bears, are some of the smallest creatures on earth—but they're also some of the most resilient. These tiny eight-legged beings can survive extreme conditions that would quickly kill most other forms of life. They can withstand temperatures of down to 458 degrees below zero!

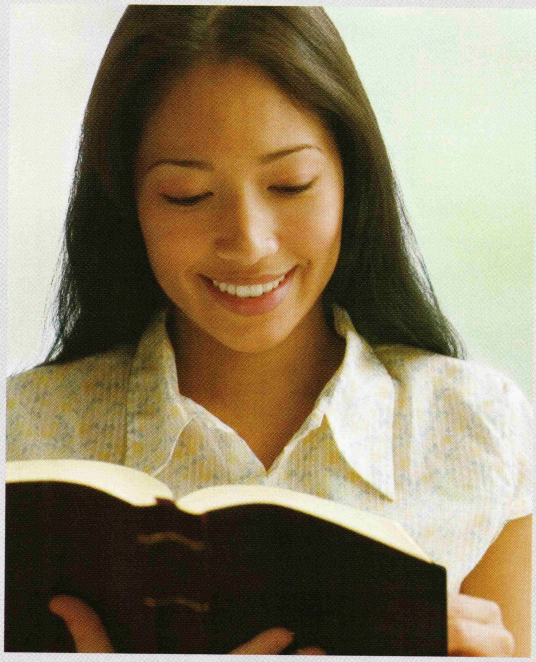
Water bears can also endure pressures six times greater than what is found in the lowest depths of the sea and can even withstand ionizing radiations in doses hundreds of times greater than a lethal dose for humans. These tough little creatures have been exposed to the vacuum of space and can go without food or water for more than thirty years—they simply shrivel up. Yet a tiny drop of water will rehydrate them—and it is as if they come back to life.

> Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Paul used the word "immortality" to describe what is *given* to the saints at the resurrection. See 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54. Never is it used as something inherent to humans.

has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die' " (Genesis 3:2, 3).

We can also see that the consequence of being driven from Eden reveals that God did not create humans as immortal beings who would naturally live forever. "Now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever," He "drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:22, 24).



## The Wages of Sin

Life is a gift from God to humans.

When the Lord created Adam and Eve, He gave them the freedom to obey or disobey Him. They could enjoy the gift of eternal life, but it was based upon their willingness to continue in a trusting, obedient relationship with God.

The Bible record reveals that the first pair forfeited their access to the tree of life when they chose to sin, and this decision led to eventual death—a tragedy that has plagued human beings ever since.

In contrast to God's clear teaching on the results of disobedience, the serpent (Satan) told Eve, "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). The devil, whom Jesus called the father of lies (John 8:44), blatantly contradicted God's word. In essence, Satan told Eve, "You are inherently immortal—no matter what you do." Humans have been tempted to believe this falsehood ever since, and the embracing of inherent immortality has led to terrible consequences.

Yet the Bible consistently teaches otherwise. One well-known verse plainly states that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Yet many don't take this Bible verse at face value. They teach that the wages of sin is not death but *eternal life in hellfire.* Yet Scripture says eternal life is a special gift that must be bestowed by the Father in heaven.

One of the most quoted passages in the Bible, John 3:16, clearly reveals this truth. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (emphasis added). To "perish" means to die. Simply put, sin leads to death for everyone, and always has. The only way to receive eternal life is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who do not receive the gift of salvation are doomed to perish.

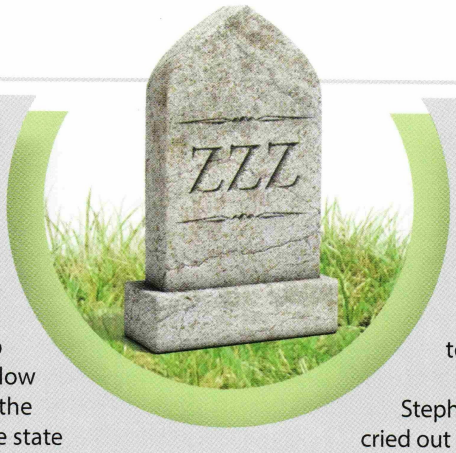
## Death, Euphemistically

It's easy to understand why people are so quick to believe the devil's lies about immortality—we simply don't want to die. Death is such an unpleasant topic that humans have come up with euphemisms to cope with it. Here are a few of the most popular in the English language:



Bite the big one
Bite the dust
Breathless
Expire
Go south
Meet your maker
Push up daisies
Sleep the big sleep
Buy the farm
Cash in your chips
Croak
Fall off your perch
Go to a better place
Pass away
Check out
Turn your toes up
Check out the grass from underneath
Put on the wooden overcoat
Depart
Give up the ghost
Kick the bucket
Peg it
Shuffle off this mortal coil
Go up the river






## The Sleep of Death

The Bible uses another word for death—"sleep."

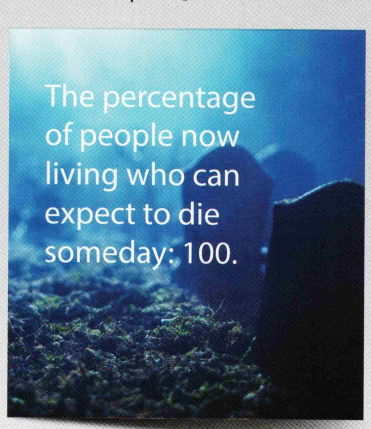
You might suppose that Bible writers used the term sleep only occasionally to soften the blow of the subject. In fact, they used the word consistently to describe the state of death. Israel's ancient historians spoke of their kings "sleeping" or "resting" with their forefathers. "Solomon rested ('slept' KJV) with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David" (1 Kings 11:43).

Job wrote, "Man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he? As water disappears from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dries up, so man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep" (Job 14:10–12).

King David wrote, "Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psalm 13:3). Daniel the prophet foretold, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

New Testament writers also used the word sleep to describe the state of death. When Jairus' daughter died, Jesus came to raise her up. "When He came in, He said to them, 'Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping' " (Mark 5:39). When Lazarus died, Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps" (John 11:11). When they misunderstood Him, "Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead' " (verse 14).

When Luke wrote about the martyrdom of Stephen, he said, "Then [Stephen] knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60). Peter also referred to death as a sleep. (See 2 Peter 3:4.)

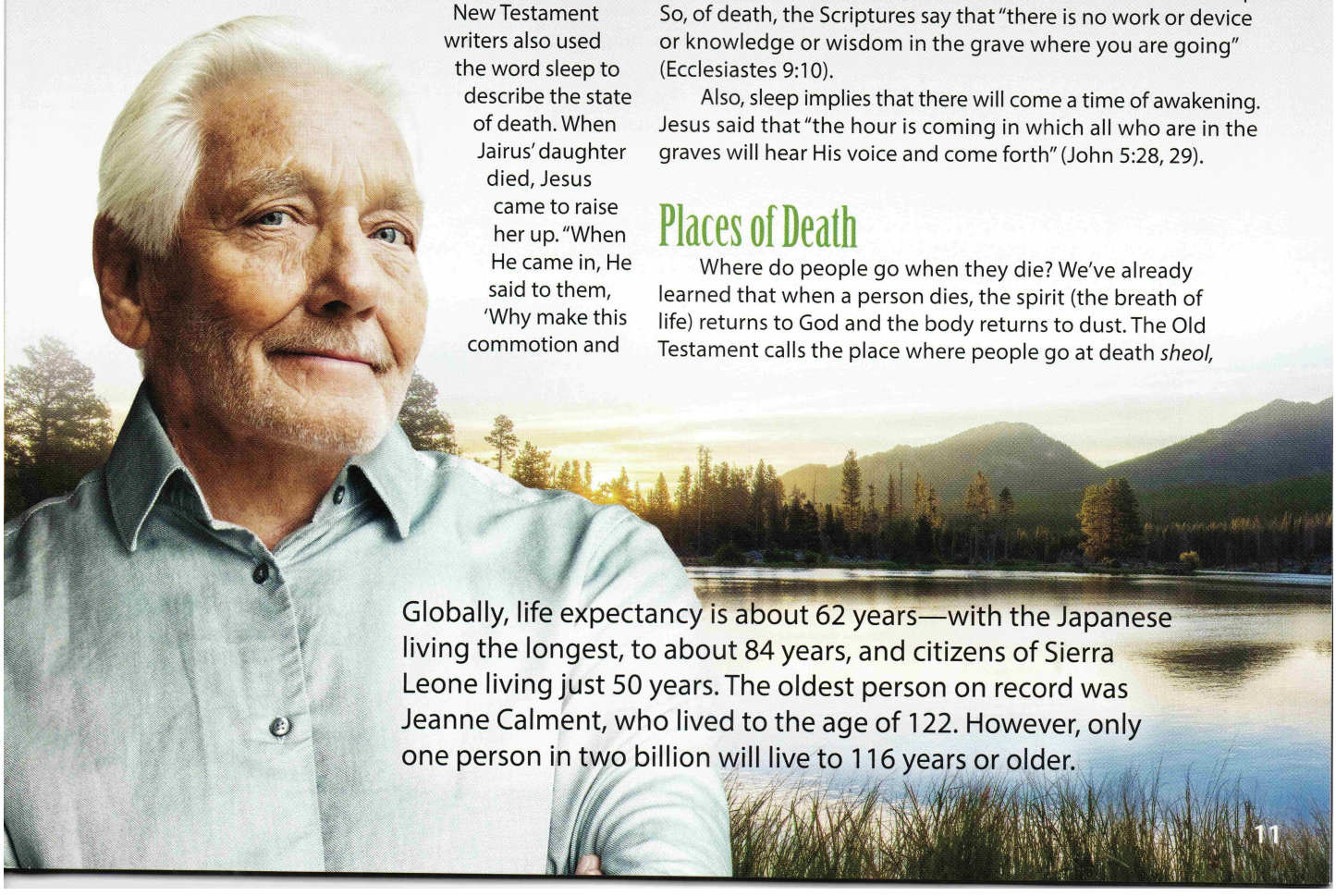



Sleep is the perfect illustration to describe the state of death. When we are asleep, we are unconscious of our surroundings. The Bible says of death, "The living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). Our daily activities cease when we are asleep. So, of death, the Scriptures say that "there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Also, sleep implies that there will come a time of awakening. Jesus said that "the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth" (John 5:28, 29).

## Places of Death

Where do people go when they die? We've already learned that when a person dies, the spirit (the breath of life) returns to God and the body returns to dust. The Old Testament calls the place where people go at death *sheol,*



Globally, life expectancy is about 62 years—with the Japanese living the longest, to about 84 years, and citizens of Sierra Leone living just 50 years. The oldest person on record was Jeanne Calment, who lived to the age of 122. However, only one person in two billion will live to 116 years or older.




a Hebrew word that simply means "grave." The New Testament uses the Greek word *hades*.

The Bible teaches that everyone who dies goes to the grave. "What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?" (Psalm 89:48). Both righteous and wicked people go to this place. When Jacob thought Joseph had died, his children tried to comfort him. But he refused to be comforted and said, "I shall go down into the grave (*sheol*) to my son in mourning" (Genesis 37:35). Likewise, wicked Korah and his cohorts went "down alive into the pit (*sheol*)" (Numbers 16:30).

People are not conscious in the grave. Again, the Bible compares death to sleep and explains that "the dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). The soul does not have a separate entity that lives beyond the grave at death. The dead are in a state of unconsciousness in the grave until the resurrection when the grave (*hades*) will give up the dead. (See Revelation 20:13.)

## Absent from the Body

If all this is true, then what did the apostle Paul mean when he said he would rather be "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord" in 2 Corinthians 5:6–8?

This famous passage says, "We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

In verses 1–8, the apostle compared our present mortal state with our future immortal life in heaven. He was showing us the difference between our earthly bodies that will someday perish and the new, perfect bodies that will be ours in heaven. Notice the expressions he used for the two conditions:

| *Present Mortal State* | *Future Immortal State* |
|---|---|
| earthly house | building from God |
| this tent | house not made with hands |
| mortality | our habitation which is from heaven |
| in the body | absent from the [mortal] body |
| absent from the Lord | present with the Lord |

Remember, the Bible is clear that when we die, we're simply dead until the resurrection. So, being absent from the body means to be absent from the infirmities of our earthly bodies, such as disease, sickness, and death. To be present

### The Bible Word for "Soul"

| Old Testament (Hebrew) Word | New Testament (Greek) Word | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| *nephesh* נֶפֶשׁ | *psuche* ψυχή | Person, being, life, creature |

### The Bible Word for "Spirit"

| Old Testament (Hebrew) Word | New Testament (Greek) Word | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| *rûach* רוּחַ | *pněuma* πνεῦμα | Wind, breath, vital element, mind, spirit |

with the Lord means to have our glorious immortal bodies that we'll receive when Jesus comes.

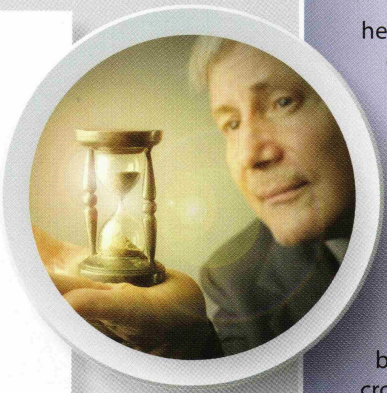
Because we have no consciousness of time in death, it is certainly true that following the moment of death, the believer's next conscious thought is in his or her glorified body. But that does not happen until the return of Christ and the resurrection. Indeed, Paul very precisely noted when the change from mortality will take place. In 1 Corinthians 15:52, 53, he wrote, "The trumpet will sound ... and this mortal must put on immortality." That will happen only when Jesus comes.

## What About Reincarnation?

Many people believe in reincarnation, another teaching that says the soul never dies; in this case, the soul supposedly is continually reborn into a different kind of body with each succeeding generation.

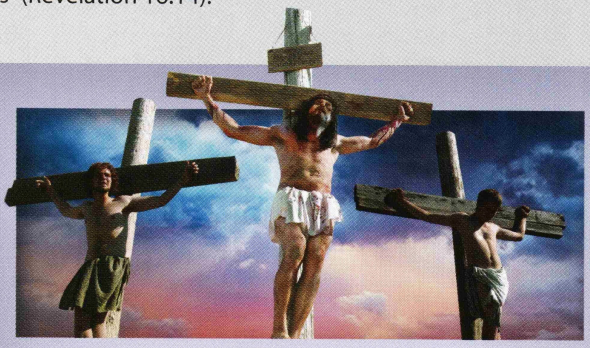
Is reincarnation compatible with the Bible? It cannot be, for the Scriptures teach that when a person dies, he returns to the earth as dust. The dead do not have powers of thought (Psalm 146:4), nor do they have anything to do with what is happening on the earth (Ecclesiastes 9:6).

In 1900, life expectancy in the United States was forty-nine years. Today, it's over seventy-eight years. The U.S. Census Bureau projects life expectancy will top out in the low nineties sometime after 2050.



Moreover, the belief that our good works will somehow help us to be reincarnated into a higher realm on this earth is contrary to the Bible's teaching that salvation comes only through Christ, and not good works. (See Ephesians 2:8, 9.) Humans are fallen and are never to be exalted as gods. (See Jeremiah 17:9.) The Scriptures also do not teach that there is a second chance after death. (See Hebrews 9:27, 28.)

Satan, we learned, invented the teaching that the dead are somehow still alive. Reincarnation, channeling, communication with spirits, spirit worship, and the "undying soul" are all inventions of the devil. He wants to convince people that when you die, you are not really dead. Those who believe you can communicate with the dead are deceived by the "spirits of demons, performing signs" (Revelation 16:14).



## The Thief on the Cross

Didn't Jesus assure the thief on the cross that he would be with Him in paradise that very day? "Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise' " (Luke 23:43).

Some believe from this verse that people go to heaven immediately after death—a teaching that contradicts many other Bible texts. There are two main problems with this assumption.

First, even though Jesus told the thief, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise," three days later He told Mary, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father" (John 20:17). So Jesus Himself says He did not go to heaven on the day of His crucifixion.

The second problem comes from when Jesus and the thief died. When soldiers came just before sunset to hasten the death of those on the crosses, Jesus was already dead (John 19:32–34). But since the thieves were still alive, the soldiers broke their legs. It is possible they lived until past sundown. So how could Christ confidently assure the thief of being with Him in paradise that day when the thief may not have even died that day?

This dilemma is best resolved by studying what the Bible teaches about the state of the dead. The Scriptures clearly state that until the coming of Christ, the dead are in their graves, not in paradise. (See John 11:11–14; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17.)

It's also important to remember that Bible punctuation is not inspired but was added at the time of translation. The commas in this verse were not in the original manuscripts. A Bible copyist simply placed a comma before the word "today" instead of after it. The verse is more clearly translated as, "I assure you today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

# The Rich Man and Lazarus

Doesn't the story of the rich man and Lazarus teach that when we die, we go directly to heaven or hell? This passage, found in Luke chapter 16, says, "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (verses 22, 23).

Jesus' story about the rich man and Lazarus is either literally true or it is a parable. Here are five reasons why it should not be taken literally:

1 **It contains an impossible conversation.** The parable portrays the rich man in "Hades" speaking directly to Lazarus in "Abraham's bosom." Can people in heaven have conversations with people in hell? For that matter, do people in heaven really watch people burning in hell? Not according to Jesus, who described a "great gulf fixed" (verse 26) between the saved and the lost.

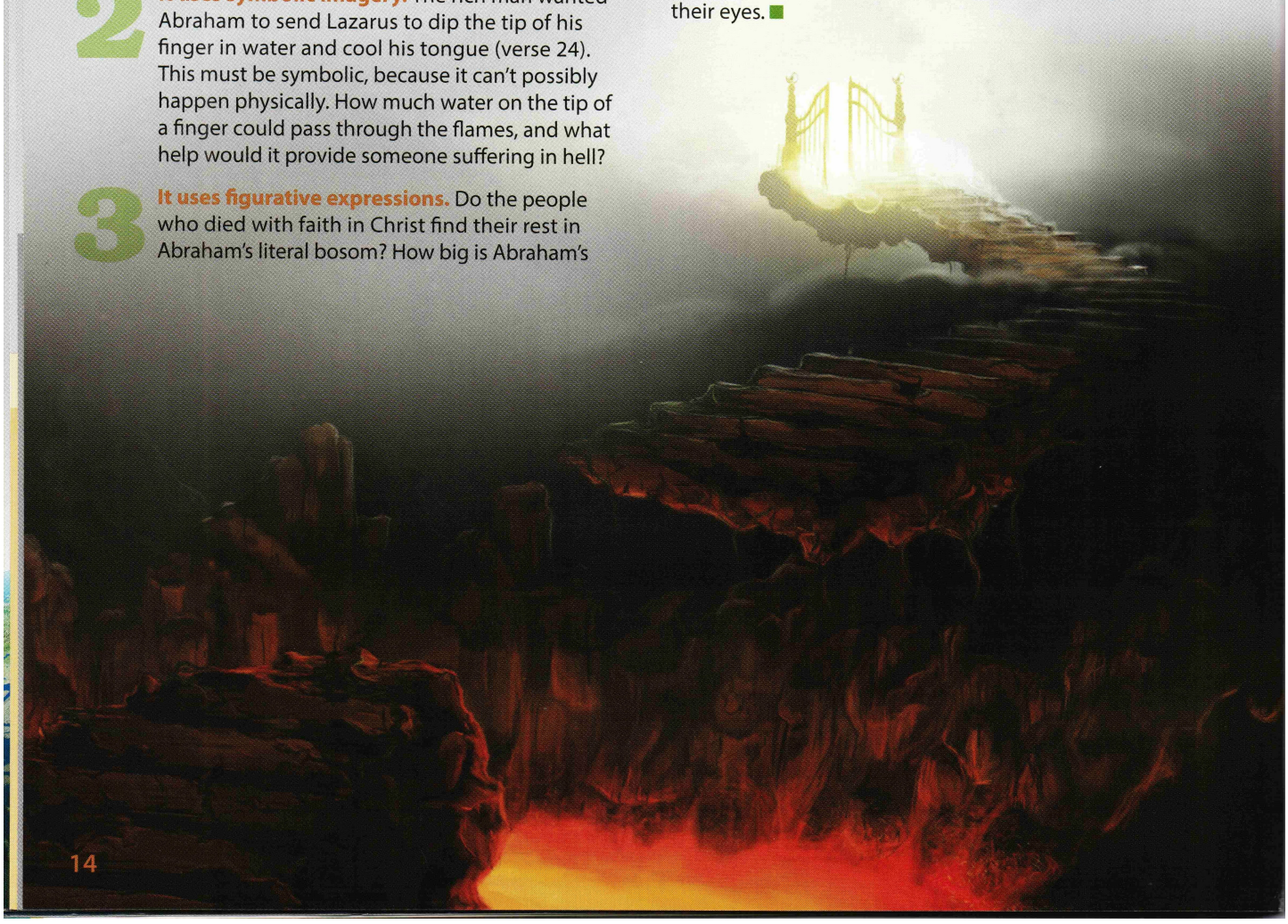
2 **It uses symbolic imagery.** The rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue (verse 24). This must be symbolic, because it can't possibly happen physically. How much water on the tip of a finger could pass through the flames, and what help would it provide someone suffering in hell?

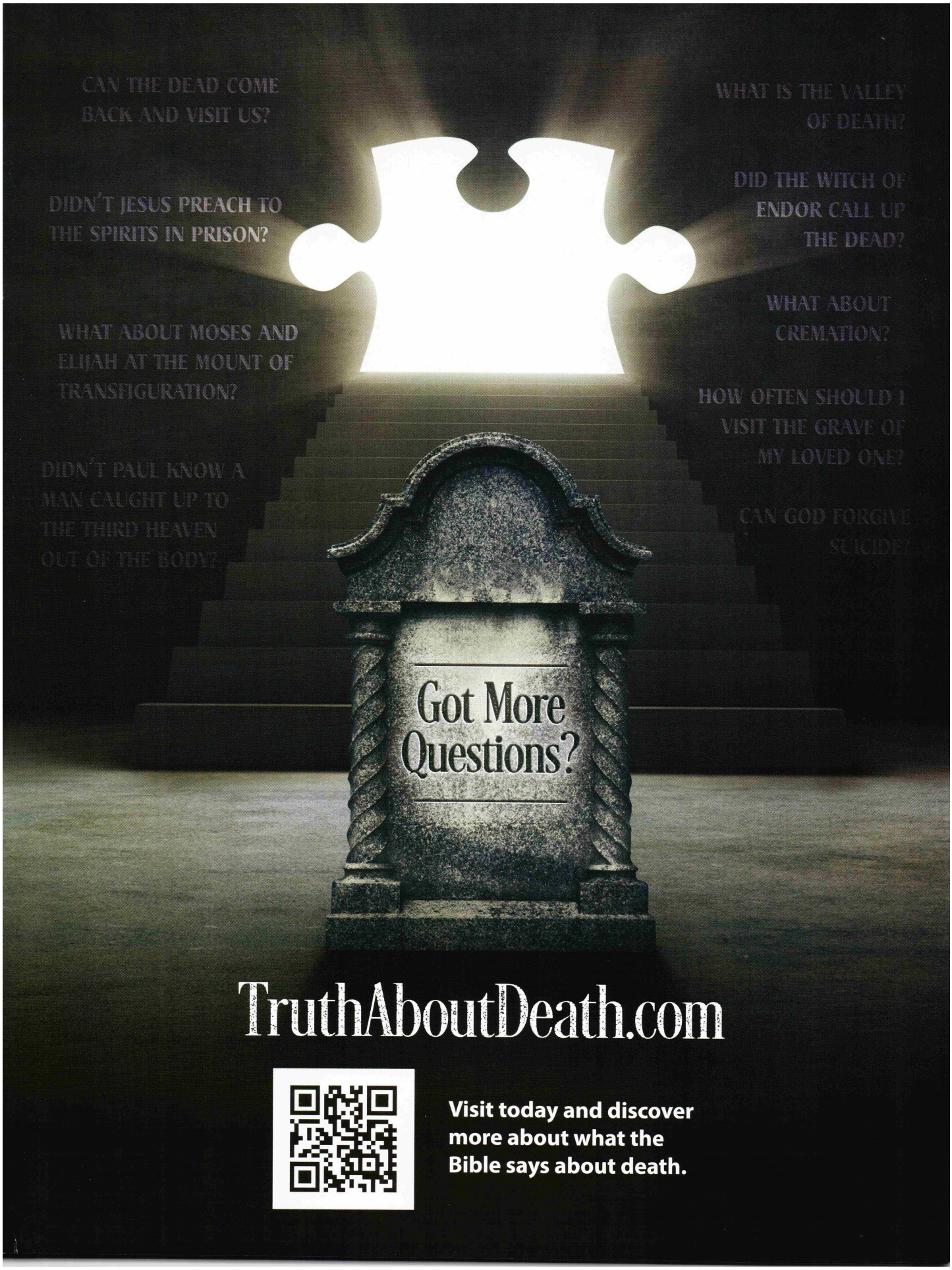
3 **It uses figurative expressions.** Do the people who died with faith in Christ find their rest in Abraham's literal bosom? How big is Abraham's bosom? This must be a figurative expression, since angels will gather the saints "from one end of heaven to the other" at the second coming of Christ. (See Matthew 24:30, 31.)

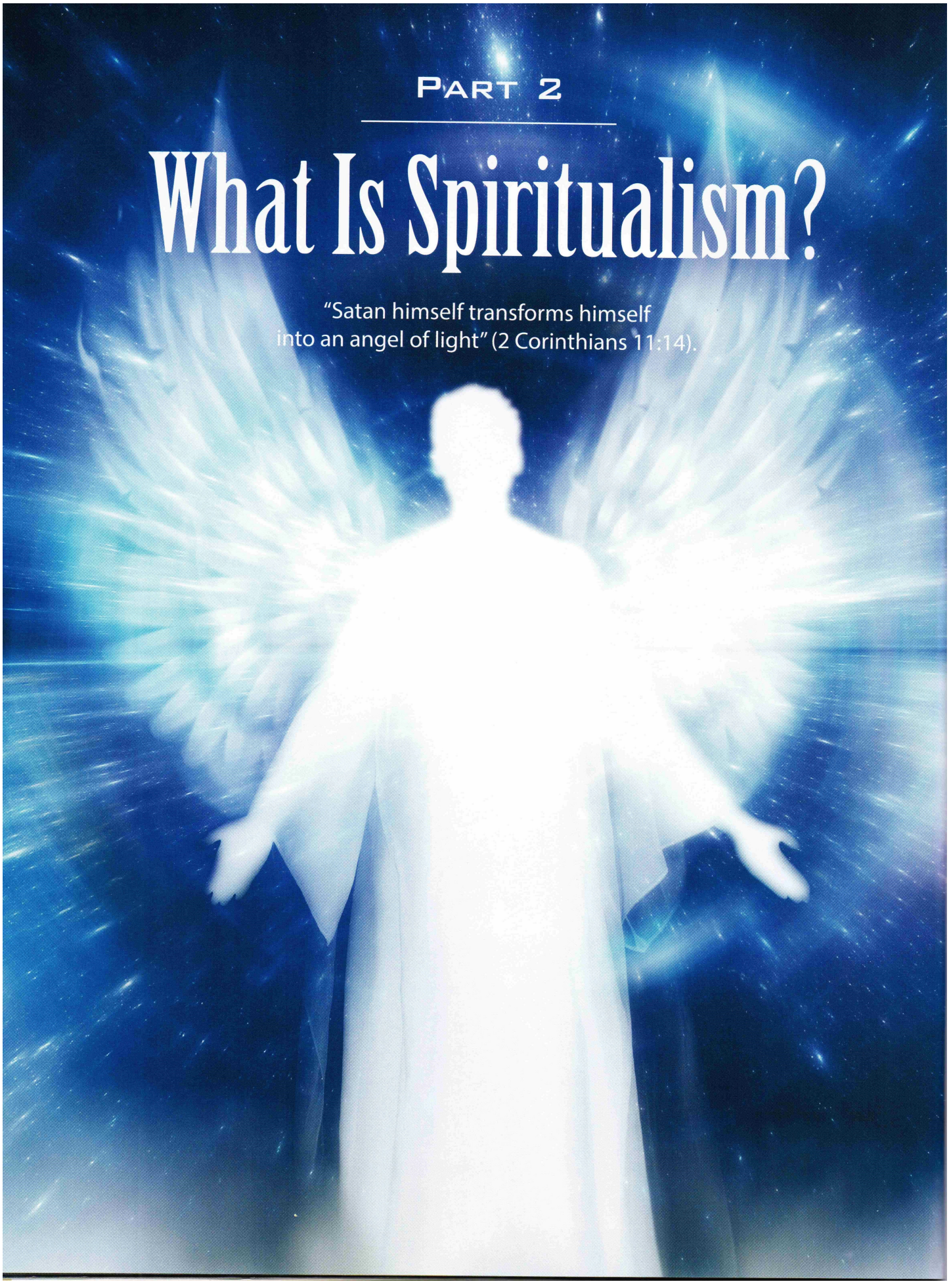
4 **It would otherwise contradict the rest of Scripture.** If this story were literal, it would be hard to explain why the Bible says "in death there is no remembrance" (Psalm 6:5). Instead, those who die are asleep in the grave awaiting resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16).

The larger context of this parable shows that the rich man represented Jewish religious leaders of the time, and the beggar symbolizes the Gentiles, who were counted unworthy to receive the truths of God.

Christ might have chosen the name of Lazarus because later He would actually raise Lazarus from the dead. The main point of the parable is found in Luke 16:31. "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." That's just what happened; the Jewish leaders did not believe even when one named Lazarus was raised from the dead right before their eyes. ■




CAN THE DEAD COME BACK AND VISIT US?
DIDN'T JESUS PREACH TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON?
WHAT ABOUT MOSES AND ELIJAH AT THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION?
DIDN'T PAUL KNOW A MAN CAUGHT UP TO THE THIRD HEAVEN OUT OF THE BODY?
WHAT IS THE VALLEY OF DEATH?
DID THE WITCH OF ENDOR CALL UP THE DEAD?
WHAT ABOUT CREMATION?
HOW OFTEN SHOULD I VISIT THE GRAVE OF MY LOVED ONE?
CAN GOD FORGIVE SUICIDE?
Got More Questions?
TruthAboutDeath.com
Visit today and discover more about what the Bible says about death.



PART 2

# What Is Spiritualism?

"Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Try following this line of reasoning: A feather is light. What is light cannot be dark. Therefore, a feather cannot be dark.

You probably detected something wrong with the conclusion, because the word "light" can have two different meanings. Catching the misuse of words is not always this easy. That is why playing with words is such a powerful strategy for deception.

Satan, a master deceiver and liar, twisted God's words when he tempted Eve to rebel. He told a subtle lie about death, and he's still telling this untruth to people today—and it's working in his favor.

Here's another example of this deception at work: People today like to "stay in touch." That's a good thing when you want to build close relationships with family and friends. It's how we express love. However, if by "staying in touch" you mean you want to contact a dead relative, it suddenly becomes one of the most dangerous things you can do. Nearly a third of Americans believe they have been "in touch" with the dead.

Spiritualism is the belief that the spirits of the dead can communicate with the living, usually through a medium. Where did this idea originate? And what does the Bible say about attempting to contact the dead? Before you try talking to a deceased relative or friend, it's important that you know the answers to these vital questions!

## The Roots of Spiritualism

The belief that one can communicate with the dead goes back to the dawn of human history. The practice was not very common in the United States until the 1800s, when the curious began to visit spiritualists—called mediums, channelers, clairvoyants, or psychics—to supposedly contact their dead relatives for reassurance or advice. These mediums claim to hear and convey messages from the spirits of people who have died.

This practice can be traced to medieval Europe and to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. However, we can follow the roots of spiritualism even further back.

As you've already learned, the very first reference to death occurs in the book of Genesis. In Eden, Eve encountered Satan, the deceiver, who disguised himself as a beautiful creature. It is here that we find the very origin of spiritualism.

God had placed two distinct trees in the garden. One was called the tree of life, which bore fruit that gave immortality to those who ate it. The other was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were warned by God that eating from this forbidden tree would result in their deaths.

> Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it *you shall surely die* (Genesis 2:16, 17, emphasis added).

However, Satan said to Eve, "You will *not* surely die" (Genesis 3:4, emphasis added). He assured her that even if she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she would *not* experience death, contradicting what God had said.

Sadly, Eve fell for his deception, and many today are still falling for the same lie. Do you really die even when you are dead? The vast majority of people still believe the answer is no. Thus began the false idea that we live forever. But, as we have already learned, it's a belief that crumbles before the plain teaching of Scripture.

Why is this lie so important to the devil? Because spiritualism uses an "authoritative" channel to teach people his destructive ideas and lead them to ruin. If the dead are really dead, then who do you think is speaking to us in séances and through psychics? It cannot be our loved ones, because they are in the grave.



Spiritualism is the belief that the spirits of the dead can communicate with the living.

## Séances and Popular Mediums

It may come as a shock to you that Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of the famous president, took part in séances, especially after her husband's assassination. She dabbled in spirit photography and often claimed to have felt her husband's presence during séances. This might seem like a feel-good story at first; however, Mrs. Lincoln began to hear voices and was eventually forced into an insane asylum. She even attempted suicide. Her son Robert believed that much of her erratic behavior was the result of her involvement in spiritualism.

The experience of the Fox sisters is considered a milestone for spiritualism. Three sisters in upstate New York claimed to communicate with the ghost of a dead peddler buried in the basement of their home. Interest in the rapping sounds they heard grew far and wide, and they began to travel and demonstrate their communications with spirits of the deceased. Forty years after their first communications, Maggie Fox, the eldest of the three sisters, claimed that the whole thing was fake—but later claimed again that it was real, a sign of the practice's inherent deceptive nature.

The Fox sisters were among the first in a long wave of popular mediums, many seen on television decades later, such as John Edward and the program *Crossing Over*. The late Princess Diana and Nancy Reagan remain popular icons of spiritualism. And while spiritualists are often subjected to investigations by skeptic groups, who typically explain away these hoaxes, nothing—not even Bible truth—has convinced spiritualists to stop their practices.

We should not forget Bible warnings about the evil spirits behind supposed communication with the dead. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

## A False Identity

Reuniting with a long-lost family member can be a touching experience—but only if it's authentic. The Barclay family of San Antonio had a teenage boy who went missing. Three years later, an imposter in Spain claimed to be the missing boy. The desperate family welcomed him, Frédéric Bourdin, into their home. Bourdin was a deeply troubled man, so the family was relieved to realize that he was not their son.

Spiritualism is likewise based on an imposter. The greatest danger in trying to communicate with the dead is that people can begin a relationship with a malicious foe. The Bible says that "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). This enemy, through his evil associates, can deceive us in a number of ways.

Evil spirits will try to undermine the authority of the Bible. God anticipated this when He explained how to test the spirits: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). When human beings ignore this Bible test, they become especially vulnerable to destructive misinformation.

Also, demons will paint a very different picture of God than what the Bible shows. God is loving, but as in the case of Saul (see page 19), He can be made to appear unfair, vindictive, and cold—pushing people away from the true, loving, and fair God who wants us to really know Him so we can build an authentic relationship with Him.



For years it has been widely circulated that the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose, California—which features stairs leading to nowhere and doors built into ceilings—was the result of ghosts or demons haunting the widow of the founder of the famous rifle company.



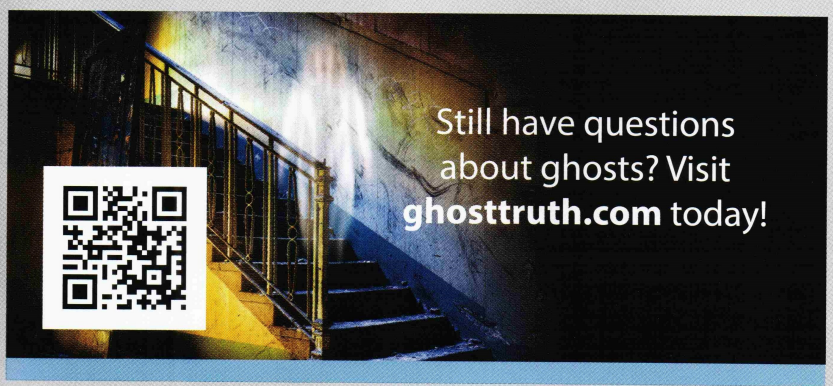
## What About Ghosts?

In the 1940s, two folklorists studied ghost stories at opposite ends of the United States—New York and California. Even with the distance between, they both found many stories of a hitchhiking ghost that appeared to be a regular human when picked up, only to disappear after being in the car for a while.

Despite advances in science, such supernatural stories are not a thing of the past. Variations of ghost hauntings still circulate widely today, and they aren't going to go away. Hollywood and the publishing world feed this intense interest in ghosts.

So the deeper question we must ask is, Are these the spirits of the deceased, or is there another power involved? What does the Bible say about ghosts? As we have learned, ghosts cannot be our departed loved ones because they are dead, resting in the grave until the resurrection. (See Acts 2:29.) If they are not the dead, who are they? God's Word explains that all supernatural activity—aside from God and His angels—is from the devil (1 Corinthians 10:20; Deuteronomy 32:17). Remember, "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Why is this so important to know today? The Bible predicts that as the end of time draws near, people will become more open to the teachings of "deceiving spirits" (1 Timothy 4:1). If a ghost-like spirit approaches you claiming to be a long-lost relative, you should not believe it (1 John 4:1). If the spirit says something that contradicts the Bible, it is not speaking on behalf of God (Isaiah 8:19, 20).




## What About Saul and the Witch of Endor?

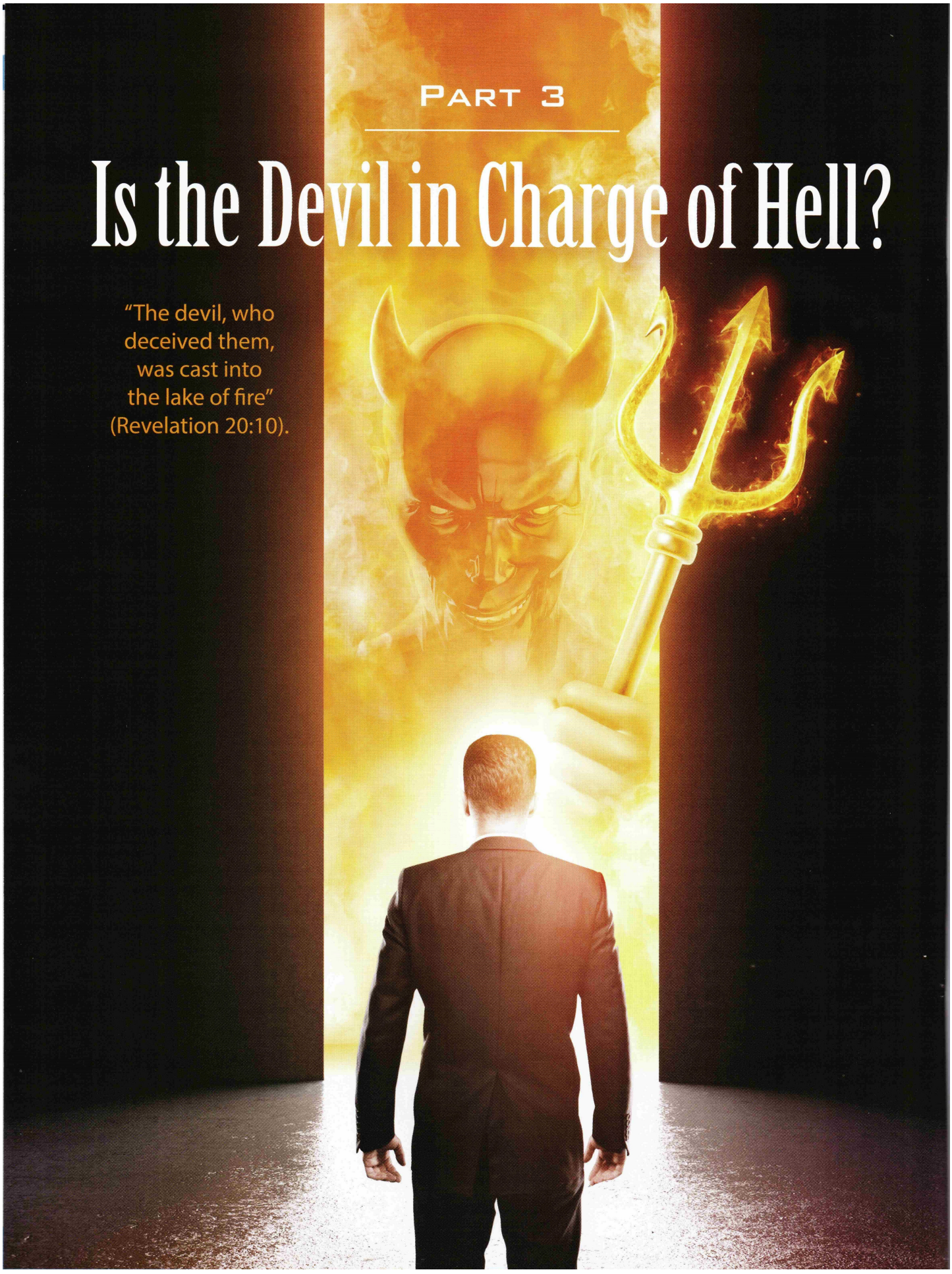
King Saul had often heard from God through the prophet Samuel, but the king rebelled against the Lord's instructions. After one of his most glaring rebellions, Samuel warned Saul that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Samuel 15:23). In other words, if you don't want to listen to God, you might as well be listening to the supposed spirits of the dead at a séance.



This might sound extreme, but the Canaanite and Moabite religions involved séances in which those who were considered gods after death were asked to predict the future. The rituals often included an animal sacrifice and the eating of a meal with blood. However, these spirits they were contacting were actually demons. (See Psalm 106:37, 38.)

God eventually stopped communicating with Saul. Desperate, Saul thought he could hear from God by asking a witch to contact the prophet Samuel, who had since died. But the witch worshiped like a Canaanite. She referred to the spirit she saw with the Hebrew word *elohim,* translated "gods" (1 Samuel 28:13), and concluded the séance by killing a fatted calf (verse 24), the word "kill" coming from a Hebrew word meaning "sacrifice." Eventually, God condemned what Saul did (1 Chronicles 10:13, 14) and said that it would lead to his death.

Instead of encouraging Saul, the spirit impersonating Samuel suggested that God was increasing Saul's punishment even though Saul had already been disciplined for his sins. Saul believed the demon and killed himself in battle. What a sad ending to one who turned from God to the spirits of devils.



PART 3

# Is the Devil in Charge of Hell?

"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10).

# Is There Really a Hell?

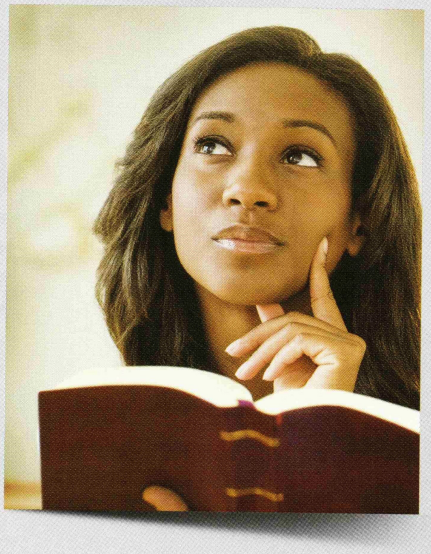
Most every culture and religion has some concept of hell—whether it's a nether world in which the dead continue to exist in painful misery or merely a dark realm of evil spirits. Of course, some think hell is simply dramatic medieval fiction preachers use to scare people.

If there is a hell, where is it located? And what is its ultimate purpose?

Almost all views of hell portray it as a place of torment in the afterlife. Some teach that it is a destination where wicked people suffer without end. Others say it is a spiritual intermediary period between physical incarnations. Some believe hell is nothing more than the abode of the dead, an empty darkness of dust and silence.

Of course, our source for discovering the truth about hell is the Bible. You might assume you know what it says about hell because you've heard preachers talk about it. You might have also seen hell described in horror movies or lampooned in comedy shows. But have you ever really studied what the Bible says about hell?

## Hellish Words

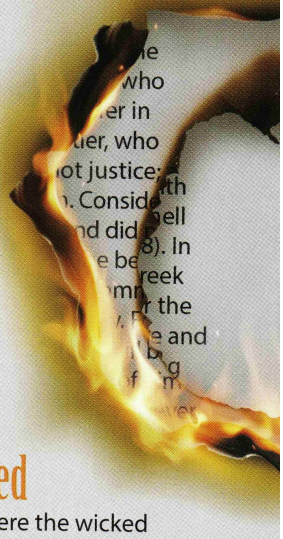


Let's clear up some confusion about the word "hell" in English translations of the Bible. Sometimes the Old Testament Hebrew word *sheol* and the New Testament Greek word *hades* are translated as "hell," such as in the King James. But many modern versions avoid translating these words as "hell" because *sheol* and *hades* do *not* speak of a place of burning and torment.

Many versions use *sheol* and *hades* to describe the place where both the deceased righteous and wicked await the resurrection and judgment day: the "grave," the "place of the dead," the "depths." We already discovered in Part 1 that the dead are unconscious while in the grave.

In the New Testament, another Greek word, *gehenna,* has been translated as "hell." This term comes from the Hebrew word *Ge Hinnom,* which means "Valley of Hinnom." This valley was located on the south side of Jerusalem and was at one time a place where Israelites offered their children as sacrifices to a heathen god (2 Chronicles 28:3). The prophet Jeremiah predicted that this valley would come to be known as a "Valley of Slaughter," a place of judgment (Jeremiah 7:32). It was eventually turned into a garbage dump where dead animals and trash were burned.

Jesus used the Valley of Hinnom to illustrate the fires of hell. He warned in the Sermon on the Mount, "Whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:22). The words "hell fire" are translated from "the fires of Gehenna." Obviously, Jesus did not mean that hell was located in a pit near Jerusalem. These fires were, instead, meant to symbolize the consuming fires of the final judgment.



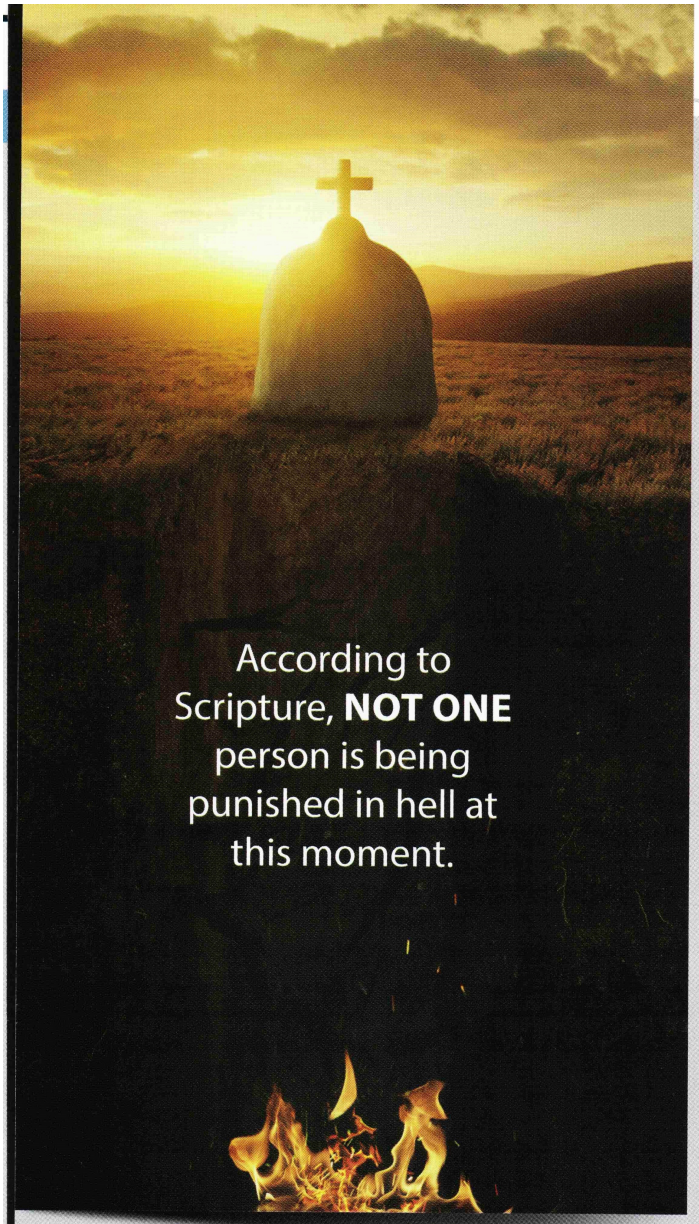
## "End of the Line" for the Wicked

What does the Bible teach about where the wicked will end up? Will evil people suffer eternally in tormenting fires of hell somewhere beneath the earth? The Bible states that the "wages of sin is *death,* but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23, emphasis added). If death is the result of sin, how could the wicked be given eternal life—even if that meant living forever in hellfire?

Let's take a closer look.

One proverb says, "There will be no prospect for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out" (Proverbs 24:20). David wrote, "Evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth" (Psalm 37:9). And, "May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more" (Psalm 104:35). Jesus explained, "As the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age" (Matthew 13:40).

What does it mean for the wicked to be "put out," "cut off," "consumed," and "burned"? One of the most direct explanations is found in the last book of the Old Testament. "Behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up … [that] will leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1). Quite plainly, God said, "You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet" (verse 3). This contradicts the popular idea that the wicked suffer eternally in the fires of hell. Instead, the Bible says they will be completely burned up, destroyed, annihilated, consumed.




## Hell: When and Where

Many world religions—including segments of Christianity—teach that evildoers are immediately transported to hell to suffer for their sins when they die. However, the Bible does not support this view.

According to Scripture, not one person is being punished in hell at this moment. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Peter 2:9). Notice that the unjust are "reserved" for a future day of judgment. The day of judgment does not happen at death but is a future event—meaning no one is being punished in hell today.

Jesus explained when sinners will be cast into hellfire. "As the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, *so it will be at the end of this age*. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:40–42, emphasis added).

Another misconception is that the fires of hell originate from inside the earth. Yet the Bible counters, "Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 20:9). Sin and sinners will be "devoured" (also translated "consumed" or "destroyed") by fire. To the wicked, "God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). The result of the final judgment is that the wicked "shall be ashes under the soles of your feet" (Malachi 4:3).

"If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner" (Proverbs 11:31).

There currently is no place where the dead have been cast into fire to be killed or tortured. All are asleep in their graves awaiting the resurrection of life or the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:29). Not until the final judgment will the wicked be cast into a lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

## Bible Terms Related to Hell

**SHEOL:** A Hebrew word in the Old Testament depicting the grave or resting place of the dead; some translations, such as King James, render it "hell."

**ABADDON:** A Hebrew word that means "destruction" or "ruin." The term is used only once in the KJV, Revelation 9:11. In the RSV, six of its seven mentions parallel the word *sheol*.

**GEHENNA:** A Greek term designating a place of punishment. Seen twelve times in the New Testament, it refers to the "Valley of Hinnom," a gorge near Jerusalem where trash was burned in the time of Jesus. He used this place to illustrate the destructive fires of the final judgment.

**HADES:** A Greek word that refers to the unseen world, the world of the dead, the grave. It is equivalent to *sheol;* some translations, such as King James, render it "hell."

**TARTARUS:** This Greek word is used only once and is interpreted as "hell" but literally means "to cast into Tartarus," the place where rebellious angels are cast.

**EVERLASTING:** From the Greek term *aiōnios.* When used in connection with the fire of the last days, it emphasizes the destructive nature of the fire, not the duration of the flames.

# What Is the Purpose of Hell?

The Bible presents God as One who is forgiving and compassionate. Jonah described the Lord as "gracious and merciful … slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness" (Jonah 4:2). The Scriptures also emphasize God's justice: "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

God created humans to live in harmony with laws that bring life and happiness. But when Adam and Eve chose another path, it brought ruin and death. Unchecked, sin would eventually destroy the world and every human being. Out of love, God created a plan to stop the spread of the disease known as evil. Jesus came to reveal God's love, willingly dying to save us from the ultimate consequence of our sin—eternal death.

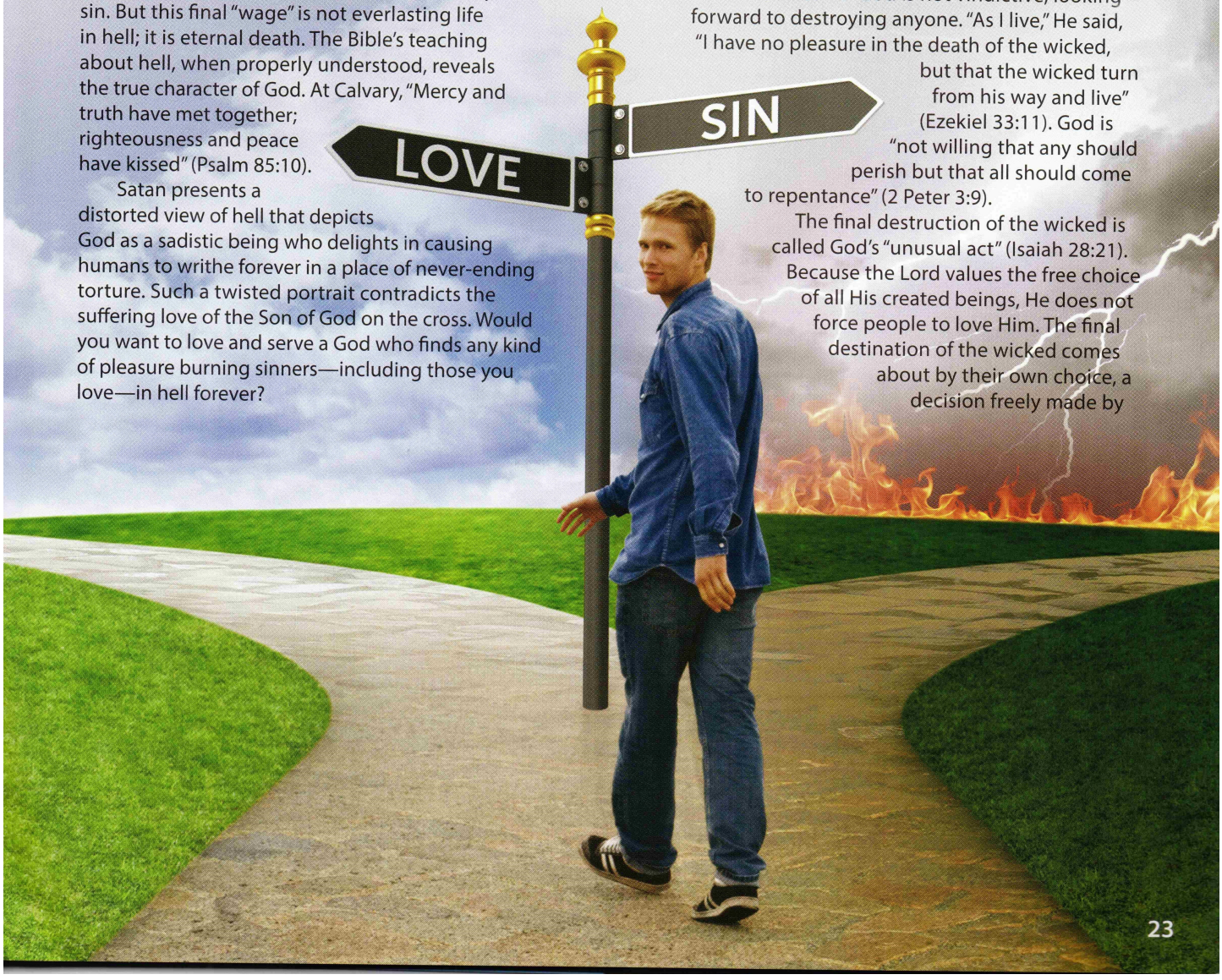
It is from a heart of love that God will stop sin. But this final "wage" is not everlasting life in hell; it is eternal death. The Bible's teaching about hell, when properly understood, reveals the true character of God. At Calvary, "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed" (Psalm 85:10).

Satan presents a distorted view of hell that depicts God as a sadistic being who delights in causing humans to writhe forever in a place of never-ending torture. Such a twisted portrait contradicts the suffering love of the Son of God on the cross. Would you want to love and serve a God who finds any kind of pleasure burning sinners—including those you love—in hell forever?

True justice demands that the punishment fit the crime. If God is just, would it make sense for Cain—who killed Abel at the beginning of the world—to suffer in hell for thousands of years *longer* than Adolf Hitler, who was responsible for killing millions? That is not justice; a just sentence is proportionate to the infraction. Consider this: "That servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47, 48). In the end, however, the punishment will cease and all the wicked will die.

The Lord does not arbitrarily punish the wicked. Their choice to separate from the Giver of Life will naturally leads to their deaths. God is not vindictive, looking forward to destroying anyone. "As I live," He said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

The final destruction of the wicked is called God's "unusual act" (Isaiah 28:21). Because the Lord values the free choice of all His created beings, He does not force people to love Him. The final destination of the wicked comes about by their own choice, a decision freely made by



those who turn from God's grace and follow their own selfish ways—roads that lead to eternal death.

## Cleansing the Earth

As we have already learned, the wicked do not immediately get cast into hell when they die. The apostle John explained when the destructive fires of hell will take place:

> When the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them (Revelation 20:7–9).

The entire earth will be a molten lake of fire, burning up and consuming all the wicked and their works. Even death itself will be destroyed. "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (verse 14).

The very next chapter tells us what happens after this. John continued, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1). In other words, the fires of hell will cleanse the earth of evil. God will restore our planet to its perfect state.

Can you imagine that God would reserve, in some corner of the new earth, a burning pit where the wicked scream in torturous agony throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity? That would not be heaven for the saved. For the parents of a lost child, knowing and hearing their beloved son or daughter crying out in agony would be hell for them!



## What About "Forever and Ever"?

Don't the phrases "the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever" in Revelation 14:11, and "unquenchable fire" in Matthew 3:12, mean the fires of hell will never go out?

The word sometimes translated "forever" in the Bible does not always mean "without end." The Bible uses this term fifty-six times in connection with things that have already ended. In Exodus 21:1–6, the Hebrew servant was to serve his master "forever"—clearly only as long as he lived. Hannah took her son Samuel to God's house to abide there "forever" (1 Samuel 1:22) and then explained that it would be "as long as he lives" (verse 28).

The term is clearly defined in Psalm 48:14: "This is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death." The smoke of the land of Edom's desolation was to ascend "forever" (Isaiah 34:10). We know it is not still burning, but, as the Bible says, lies "waste."

According to these definitions of the term "forever," the wicked will suffer as long as they continue to live in the fire. Then, as the Bible states, the wicked will be "destroyed forever" (Psalm 92:7). This means that when the work of the fire is completed, it will go out. And so the punishment of the wicked will be forever complete. There is no

everlasting state of torment, which portrays God as an evil sadist. Our loving Lord will blot sin out of existence, because He knows it would eventually destroy our world and everyone in it.

An unquenchable fire is a fire that cannot be put out. Once it begins its work, nothing can stop it. Likewise, when the fires of hell begin, no amount of water can extinguish the flames. The "unquenchable fire" mentioned in Matthew 3:12 speaks of the demise of the wicked. Since God is described in the Bible as a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24), unrepentant sinners cannot exist in His presence. They are consumed along with the sin to which they cling. At the end of time, when all have made




their final choice to either accept or reject the Lord, His glorious coming to this earth will certainly destroy and consume sinners who have refused to turn away from evil.

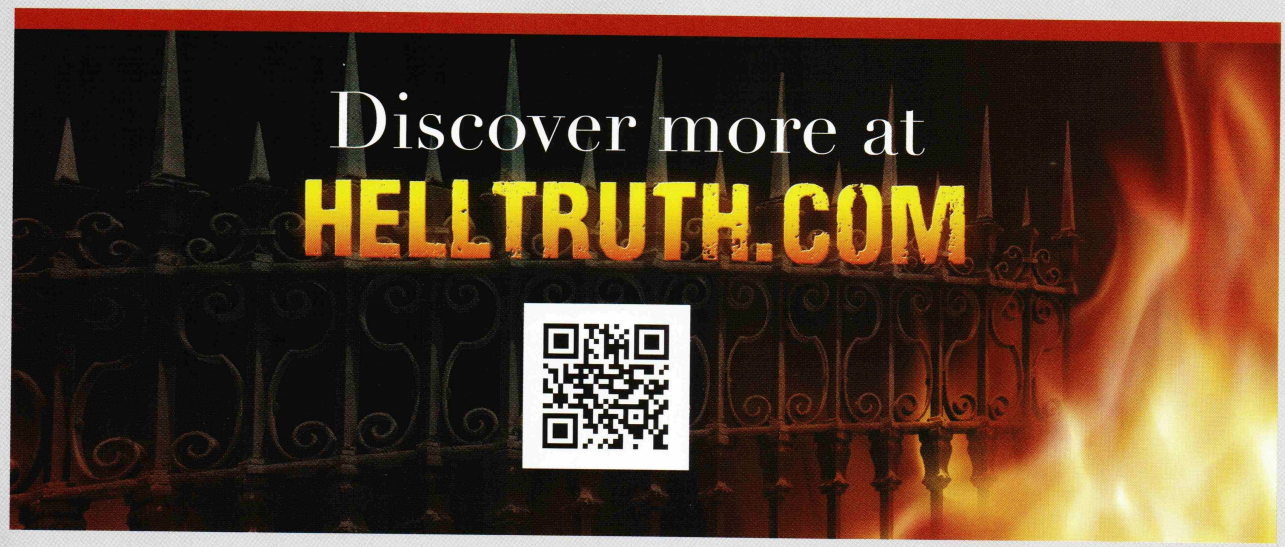
Matthew 3:10 and 12 both present two classes of people—the saved and the lost. Verse 10 compares the lost to a tree that does not bear good fruit and is cast into a fire and consumed. Verse 12 describes sinners as chaff that will "burn up." Like a refiner's fire, the sin in our lives will either be burned up—or it will burn us up with it if we are unwilling to release it to God.

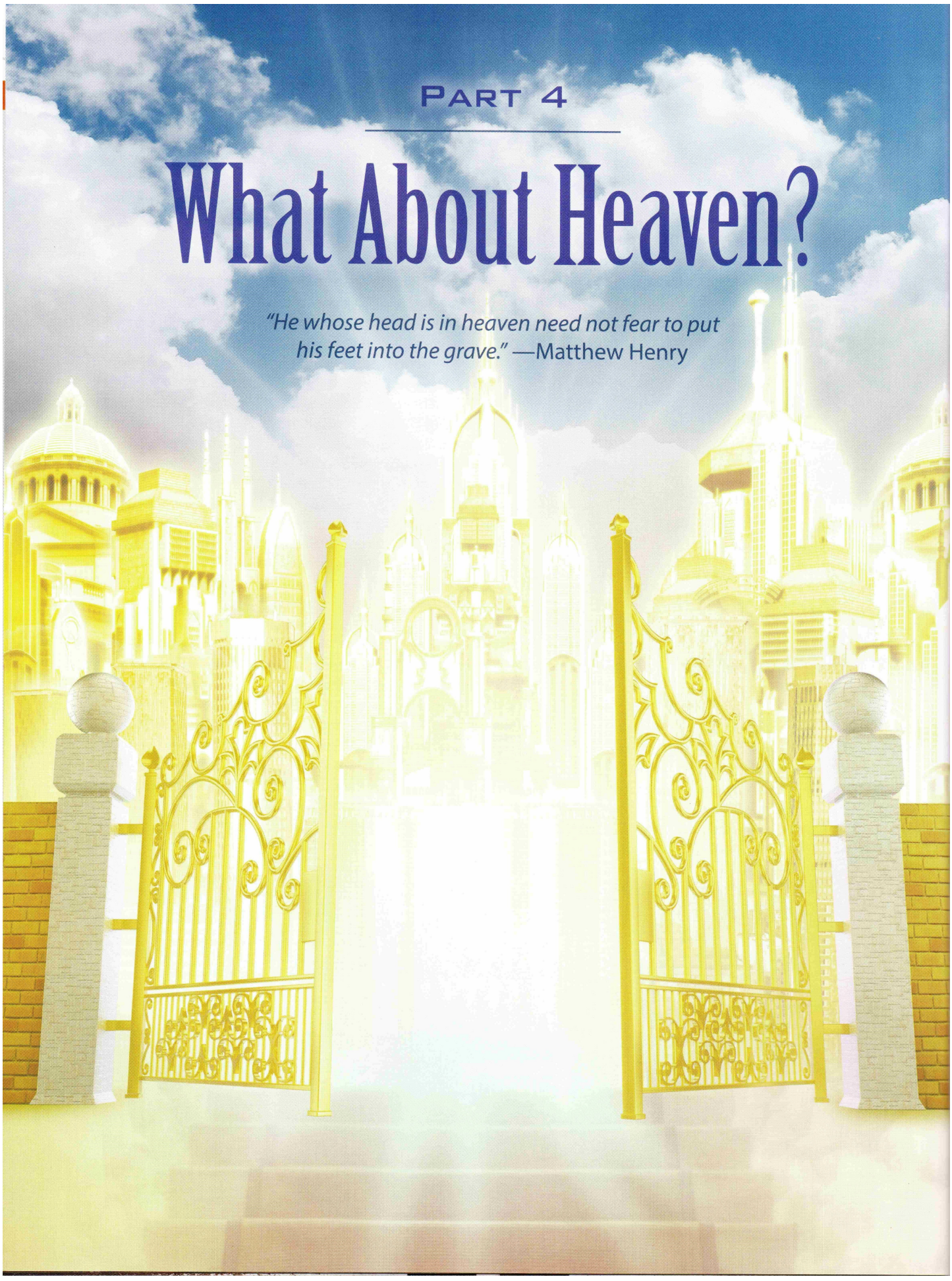
## What About the Worm That Doesn't Die?

Jesus said, "If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where 'Their worm does not die' " (Mark 9:47, 48). In this passage, the word "hell" is translated from the Greek word *gehenna,* which we learned is another name for the Valley of Hinnom, Jerusalem's city dump, where refuse and the bodies of animals were cast into an ever-smoldering fire to be consumed. What might escape the flames was constantly being destroyed by maggots. Gehenna symbolized a disgraceful place of total destruction.

Jesus taught here that the fires of hell could not be quenched. Isaiah said, "Behold, they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame" (Isaiah 47:14). In Jeremiah 17:27, God predicted that Jerusalem would burn with a fire that "shall not be quenched" and that would "devour the palaces of Jerusalem." As unquenchable fire symbolized the destruction of Jerusalem, the flames and worms of *gehenna* represent the eradication of sin and sinners.

Finally, "Their worm does not die" (Mark 9:48) cannot support the idea of the immortal soul since the "worms" do not work on "disembodied souls." According to Jesus, humans who are cast into the lake of fire will go in bodily form. In Matthew 5:30, Christ said, "It is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for *your whole body* to be cast into hell" (emphasis added). ■





PART 4

# What About Heaven?

*"He whose head is in heaven need not fear to put his feet into the grave."* —Matthew Henry

# Heaven—A Real Forever Home



Just as the devil has deceived people regarding death, he has tried to pervert our ideas about heaven. He wants us to be confused and knows that if he can portray heaven as imaginary, surreal, or even ghostly, we will lose interest.

The result? Many people visualize heaven as a place with disembodied spirits floating on clouds and strumming harps—a boring and trivial existence. If heaven were really this drab, not many of us would get excited about going there. Indeed, most of us wouldn't want any part of that kind of a "heaven." Yet nothing could be further from the truth!

To get a realistic picture of heaven, we need to find out just what the Bible really says about it. According to the Word of God, heaven is very real—every bit as tangible as our planet, but infinitely better.

# The New Jerusalem

Heaven, of course, is the place where God dwells (1 Kings 8:30).

The Bible describes a magnificent city in heaven that God is designing as a special home for all the people who choose to serve Him. Before Jesus left this earth, He made this promise to His disciples:

> In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:2, 3).

And this promise is meant for every believer!

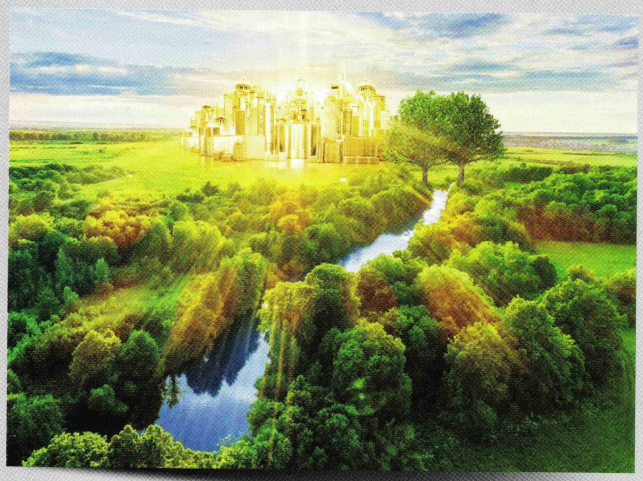
The name of this wonderful city is "New Jerusalem" (Revelation 3:12). In the New Jerusalem, God Himself will dwell with us. Revelation 21:23 says, "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light."

Although the great city is currently in heaven, the Lord has plans to relocate it.

> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:2, 3).

It is onto this very planet that the New Jerusalem will be transplanted. Of course, at that point, our earth will be in a much different state than it is now. Revelation 21:1 speaks plainly of "a new heaven and a new earth." God is going to cleanse this earth and restore it to His original plan. Isaiah 65:17 records these words: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind." Our planet will become a new paradise, and God will be with us! The new earth will be pure, without anything defiling or hurtful.

The New Jerusalem will be by far the largest and most spectacular city we have ever seen. In human terms, according to Revelation 21, it measures 12,000 furlongs around the perimeter, which translates to 1,500 miles, or 375 miles on each side! The solid jasper wall of the city is 216 feet high, and its twelve foundations are made of twelve types



of precious stone that will appear as a glistening rainbow. Inside the city are streets made of pure transparent gold, like "clear glass." But it gets even better!

Revelation 22:1, 2 tells about a special river and tree inside the city to which the saved will have access:

> He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Those who eat from this tree will enjoy abundant and everlasting life!

## New Bodies

Many people wonder if we will have real bodies in heaven. Indeed, we will have genuine, flawless bodies free of disease, deformation, or any type of affliction. That means that the blind will see, the deaf will hear, and the paralyzed will walk. We will enjoy perfect health and boundless energy. This transformation will occur at Jesus' second coming, when He "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21).

After His resurrection, Jesus proved to His disciples that He had a real body and was *not* a spirit. His words to them were, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). Our new bodies will be as real as Christ's.

Additionally, God promises that in His kingdom there will be "no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). And Revelation 7:16, 17 tells us that in heaven no one will hunger or thirst again, and that "God will wipe away every tear" from our eyes.





## Eternal Joys

So, what will we do in heaven?

With our God of infinite variety, we can be certain there will be no shortage of fascinating activities. For starters, Isaiah 65:21, 22 says that we will build homes on the new earth, plant vineyards, and enjoy the results of our work. Since, according to prophecies in Isaiah 11 and 65, all the animals in the new earth will be tame, we will spend time studying and interacting with them, along with the countless other things God has made.

We will travel and explore, enjoy heavenly music, worship before God, visit with loved ones, and make new friends—millions of them! We will enjoy getting to know people from all times in history and all parts of the world, including famous people of the Bible. Just imagine sitting down to talk with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, King David, Peter, Mary, and so many others you have read or heard about. Best of all, we will get to talk with Jesus and spend time with the One who gave His life to save us!

Can you imagine living in a place where there's no loneliness, tragedy, sickness, or death—where all the inhabitants live in harmony with one another? A place of incredibly beautiful surroundings, the most delicious foods, a perfect climate, soul-thrilling music, and warm friendships? Jesus came to this earth and died to save us and reconcile us to God so that He can give us this kind of life—the one He always wanted us to have, a life of peace and goodness, filled with variety and meaningful, fulfilling activity.

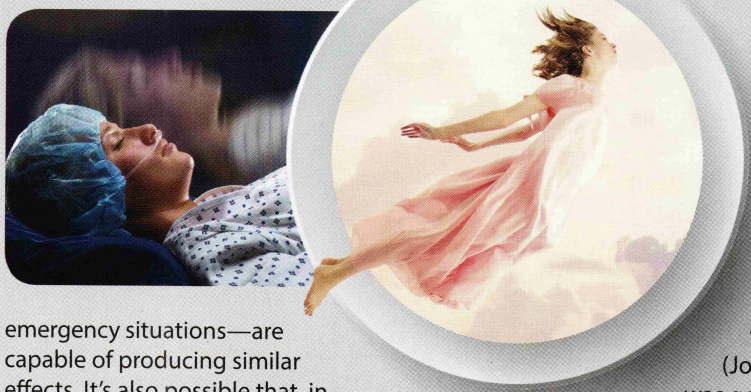
In John 11:25 Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." Because Christ died and then was resurrected, He has the power to give eternal life to His followers and take them to live with Him.

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God begins when you accept Him into your heart. (See Luke 17:21.) Have you accepted His incomparable offer of salvation and the promise of the resurrection? If you haven't, why not turn to Him right now? Put your faith in Him, accept His gift of grace, receive His full forgiveness from sin—and His promise of a never-ending future with Him will be yours.

## What about NDEs?

What about near-death experiences (NDEs)? What about people who have been close to death and report leaving their bodies or seeing loved ones in heaven? We can't dismiss NDEs as a hoax; too many people have experienced them—but we need to be careful about jumping to conclusions.

Actually, there are scientific explanations for this phenomenon. Many believe that a lack of oxygen to the brain is responsible for NDEs. The human brain, when deprived of oxygen, can readily create hallucinations. Drugs—including some used during surgery or emergency situations—are capable of producing similar effects. It's also possible that, in some cases, God may be trying to speak to the individual through a dream or vision.



Regardless of the cause, it's a serious mistake to base our beliefs on the personal experience of others, or on our own. Only the Bible can separate truth from error and give us the facts. Scripture puts NDEs in perspective and shows that we do not immediately enter heaven (or hell) at death. "The dead do not praise the LORD, nor any who go down into silence" (Psalm 115:17).

Jesus (as well as all of Scripture) clearly taught that death is a sleep. Consider the death of Lazarus, for instance. Jesus told His disciples, " 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.' Then His disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.' However, Jesus spoke of his death" (John 11:11–13).

Those who have died believing in Christ will not live again until He returns to resurrect them. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.)

## Is the Holy City Really Big Enough?

John 14:2, 3, says, "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Let's get some perspective on the size of the New Jerusalem. The city described in the Bible is more than 140,000 square miles, a little bigger than the state of New Mexico! If the city were to be crowded and each saved person given only one hundred square feet of ground space, there would be room for thirty-nine billion people—which is many times larger than the present population of the world. Statisticians believe that if all the people who have ever lived were saved, there would be plenty of room for them in the city. The Scriptures make it clear, however, that not everyone will be saved (Matthew 7:14). So there will be more than enough room in the great city.

When Jesus told His disciples that He would be leaving them, they were troubled. To comfort them, Christ explained that He would be going to His Father's house where there are "many mansions [margin: dwellings]" (John 14:2). In addition, He assured them that He was going to "prepare a place" for each of them.

Indeed, the heavenly Father has plenty of room in His place for each one of His children. The Creator of the universe is not limited on space. His love knows no bounds! So the question remains—how can you be sure that you will be there to enjoy all that heaven has to offer?



# How Can I Get to Heaven?

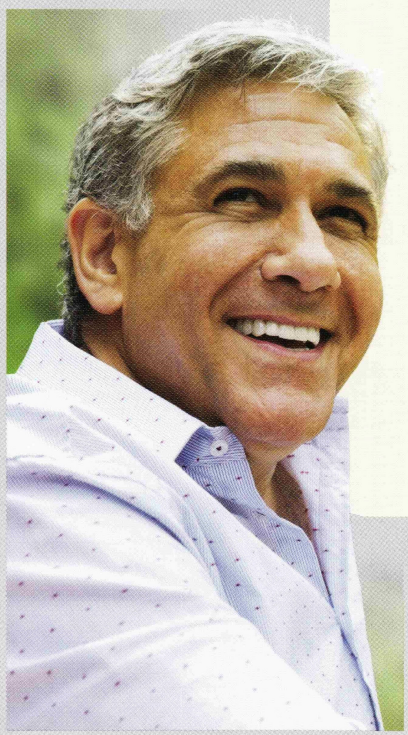
You've made a huge first step by learning the Bible truth about death, the afterlife, and heaven and hell, guarding your heart and mind from the devil's deceptions in the last days. But if you're worried you're not ready for heaven, here's what you should know:

## 1 God Loves You

"God is love" (1 John 4:8). The Bible says our Creator cares about you. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). God wants you to have a happy life. (See Jeremiah 29:11.) Our compassionate God has always wanted a meaningful and joyful relationship with you, but …

## 2 Your Sin Separates You from God

Our planet was created perfectly. There was no death or pain. But sin and evil broke everything, including your connection with God. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God" (Isaiah 59:2). You're not alone—everyone has broken God's law of love. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Unless something saves us from ourselves, we are all doomed to die, "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Sin is serious because it cuts us off from the Source of life.

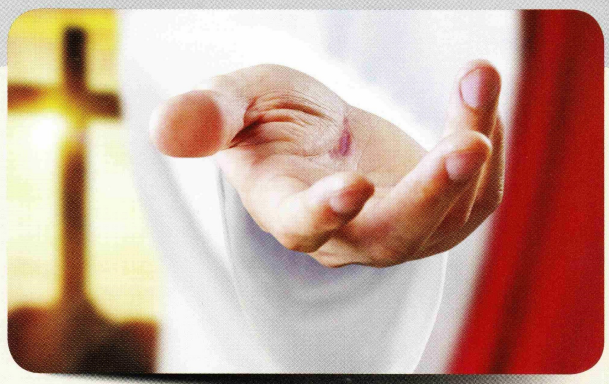


## 3 Jesus Reconnects You with God

Because of God's love for you, Jesus took upon Himself the wages of sin so you and others could live eternally. Jesus' life without sin covers your life of sin so that you can have salvation. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus offers His gift of salvation freely. It is not something we can buy—only accept. God desires to restore you and all of humanity to a life-giving relationship with Him, giving us new hearts to live lives of love and peace.

## 4 Accept Jesus Into Your Life

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). If you would like to receive Christ and His gift into your life right now, follow these simple steps:



- Recognize that naturally, you would die in your sin. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).
- Realize you cannot save yourself. Without Jesus, "you can do nothing" (John 15:5).
- Confess to God that you are a sinner and repent. "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23; Matthew 4:17).
- Believe Jesus died for you. "God so loved the world that He gave" Jesus (John 3:16).
- Believe you are forgiven. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).
- Believe you have eternal life. "He who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47).
- Now live in faith every day in your new way of life! "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6).

When you join God's family, His love changes your life. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Your old sinful nature is destroyed because Christ lives through you—fitting you for the kingdom to come.

Now that you're a citizen of heaven and the New Jerusalem, begin to live out your life under the principles of God's kingdom today!

Would you like to know more? Discover our in-depth Study Guides on the next page to continue your journey with God. ■

# Continue Your Discovery

## with the Amazing Facts Bible Study Guides!







They have already helped tens of thousands discover many more amazing and liberating truths of the Bible. And now you can experience this life-changing set of 27 Study Guides as featured in the FREE Amazing Facts Bible School!

Each lesson will lead you step by step to a clearer, comprehensive understanding of the Bible—including the truth about prophecy, the antichrist, the mark of the beast, salvation, and so much more.

Don't delay! This winsome, uplifting series will help you face the future with hope and confidence. Visit us today at

## amazingfacts.org/bible-study

### Lessons include:

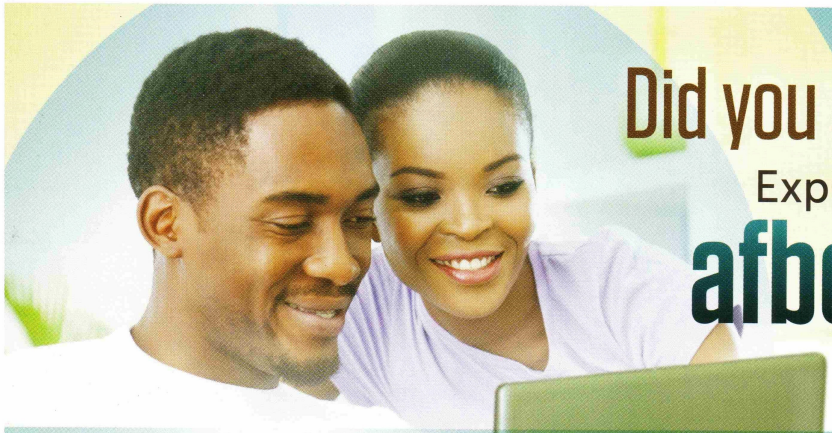
Is There Anything Left You Can Trust?
Did God Create the Devil?
Saved from Certain Death
A Colossal City in Space
Keys for a Happy Marriage
... and many more!



You can also write to **P.O. Box 909, Roseville, CA 95678** to request the mail-based course. Or purchase your own set at **afbookstore.com**!

AMAZING FACTS

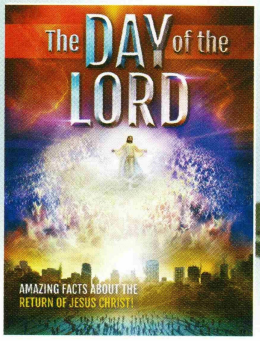
www.amazingfacts.org
916-434-3880

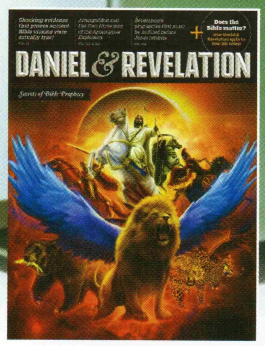


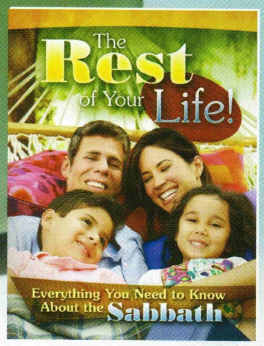
# Did you enjoy this magazine?

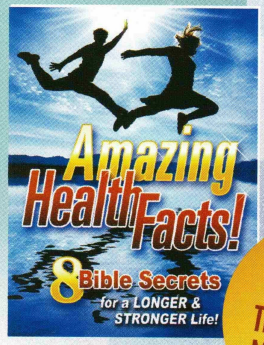
## Explore more Bible truth at

# afbookstore.com




Four Colorful, Truth-Filled Magazines!

## The Day of the Lord
### Only $2.50

Discover the signs and manner of Christ's return, the truth about the rapture, and what happens after His return. Even more important, you'll learn how to be ready for this imminent event so you can face the future with confidence!

## Daniel and Revelation: Secrets of Prophecy
### Only $3.95

This easy-to-follow guide through the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation features stunning contemporary artwork and historical images and facts that uncover the deepest mysteries of prophecy in staggering clarity.

## The Rest of Your Life
### Only $2.75

Loaded with vivid, full-color graphics and fascinating facts, this one-of-a-kind magazine reveals the astonishing truth about the Sabbath! See why it's critical for you to know the future of God's holy day!

## Amazing Heath Facts!
### Only $2.55

This full-color magazine presents eight powerful biblical health lessons in a direct, captivating way—including the benefits of a good diet, exercise, rest and the Sabbath, sunlight, water, and more. Get healthier now!

